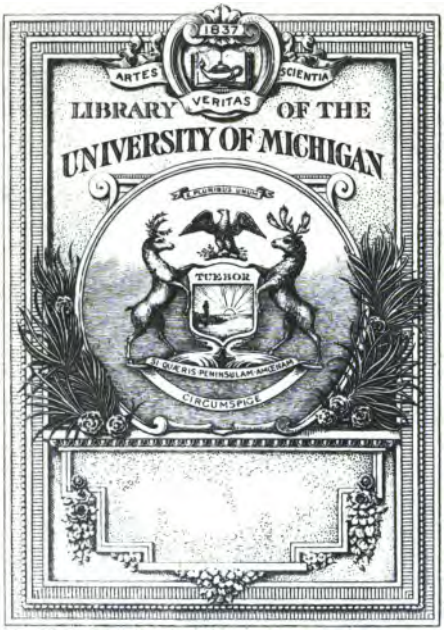
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THE

LIFE OF A LOVER.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

BY SOPHIA LEE.

Honour, that spark of the celestial fire
Which above nature makes mankind aspire,
Ennobles the rude passions of our frame.
* * * * * * * * * * * *
The richest treasure of a gen'rous breast,
Which gives the stamp and standard to the rest.
MARQ. OF HALIFAX.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. & J. ROBINSON,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1804.

THE

LIFE

OF A

LOVER.

LETTER XXVI.

TO FRANCIS TREVILIAN, ESQ.

London.

WHAT a poor fluctuating state is this of mortality, after all, Frank! when, notwithstanding our inflated panegyrics on human reason, we daily feel it hardly adequate to the intense consideration of any single object: while, alas! our senses often take the liberty of directing the æthereal part of us, and obstinately present that single object in the form of a woman.

This sweet Cecilia (I may thank her unintentional kindness in supplying, by her letter, a name so suited to the lips of a lover) reigns in my heart, my head, in every thought, in every fibre, so wholly and absolutely, that I entirely despair of dispossessing her a moment, at least till she is my own: and, oh! surely then I shall neither have the wish nor the power! How many fine arguments have I addressed to myself against even desiring to obtain her! but, in the midst of my heroics, the remembrance of a smile, or the hope of obtaining one, always puts poor Wisdom to flight, and overwhelms my fond heart with that sweet emotion lovers alone can know. Should she at last resist (and, if ever woman did, she will), how great will be her triumph!—she will deserve a thousand times more fame than Lucretia. *Her* virtue had much of the invincible pride peculiar to her country. Had her conduct been guided wholly by principle, would she not rather have sacrificed her fame to her chastity,

than her chastity to her fame?—In faith, I have often suspected honest Collatinus need not have worn weepers so soon, had not the fair one been rather apprehensive that Tarquin, like some of the ungrateful gallants of these days, would be tempted to tell first. Is there any thing which we can justly term chastity, but an innate, invariable sense of purity—a stedfast self-denial whenever the heart hesitates—in short, a hallowed approbation of ourselves, which can often only be preserved by the sacrifice of every other gratification? How fortunate, then, is the woman in whom this perfection is taken upon trust!—But why should I have selected Lucretia as my instance of female virtue? Did she love Tarquin? Did her sympathising soul forerun, as well as share, the pangs which her denial must occasion?—That is the test, the only test of chastity:—painful, at best, is the pre-eminence!

That my sweet girl has unconsciously given me her heart, her whole heart, I can

no longer doubt;—her very fears are, in reality, the strongest demonstration. The hesitation that marks every word she addresses to me; the guarded coldness of her manner; the reluctance with which her eyes are raised to mine; and the quickness with which they sink to the ground; all become, to observation so impassioned as that between us, irresistible, flattering proofs at once of her tenderness and delicacy: and is it in my nature to wound either? Oh, no! I will be only hers—she shall be only mine!

> " ——— I'll give myself away,
> " And doat on the exchange!"

I have been obliged, of late, to guard my conduct with infinite address and caution. I now come home, with a horrid noise, at the usual late hour, that my charmer may forego the troublesome apprehension which has, for some weeks past, made her quit her own apartment, to spend her evenings with people she despises. My finesse succeeds. The lights now are visible in her ante-room: there she once

more indulges in that solitude which I alone have dared to interrupt. I shall again this evening venture to break in upon it.—Ah! if I should be pardoned!

* * * * * *

Can you imagine a state more ridiculously painful, than that of wishing to annihilate every noisy wretch around you, without daring to bid any one even be quiet?—when the throwing open a drawing-room door threatens your whole system with destruction; and a footman's heavy heels, superabundantly diligent, thump, as it were, on the heart of his master?—I went from St. James's to Monro's; where I dined, on purpose to get rid of my parading blockheads, that I might go home at my own time in a hack-chair. Nothing, however, could induce Sir James to allow this: of course, his clumsy footmen made almost as much noise as my own would have done. This unexpected manœuvre of mine, too, in suddenly returning, made such a cursed commotion in the lower regions, that I was tempted to knock half

a dozen of the puppies down, in my way to my own apartment. There I was still obliged to pass a tedious interval. The sound of my Cecilia's bell (ever honoured be the smith who gave her so noisy a one!) at last informed me that the children were retiring. I watched their maid down stairs; and then knew that my charmer was, and would remain, but for me alone.

Would you believe that I trembled like a girl when I entered her apartment? She was running her playful fingers over the instrument, which gave me time to secure us both from all intruders, and take my station behind a screen which keeps from her the air of the children's chamber-door. Here was I fixed, and never less certain what would be my fate.—Oh! say not that this sweet girl means to charm me.—She knew not that I was there! She had on only her common morning-dress; yet, in that negligence, who was ever so enchanting! She sang several airs of Jackson's, and tried some which she did not

sing; while I remained, like a fool, wholly undetermined what to say or do. A book was turned down upon her table: she took it up; now tried to read; now fixed her eyes, in rêverie, on the fire—now on the cieling: at length a deep sigh seemed to relieve her over-swelled heart. Mine (confound it!) being, I suppose, by nature the echo of hers, gave back the touching tone too audibly.—Had you seen the agony which her countenance expressed, while with yet unfaltering dignity she rushed towards the object of her terror, and the involuntary relief it conveyed when she saw the screen hid only me, you would wonder I yet pursued my purpose.—Even in soothing her fears, I grasped her hand so strictly, that she reproached me with wanting that respect for her person which her dependent situation did not entitle her to exact of me. Heaven bless the fair Greeks! who, I think it is said, were the inventors of embroidery:—I have more than once reaped greater advantages from that, than I ever owed to

the poetry of Homer, or the philosophy of Epictetus! On some rough silver, my Cecilia suddenly perceived that some of her lace was entangled; and every particle of woman in her whole nature flew to her fingers' ends to rescue the treasure: this being at length done, the malicious charmer continued to stand, that she might remind me of making my exit. Finding, however, that her manœuvre did not succeed, she offered to make hers; assuring me that she had been expected by Mrs. Ellison this half hour. "I have been in the room that time at least," shrewdly replied I. She looked vexed, blushed deeply, and again attacked me on the disrespect of my conduct.

"Impute any other fault to me, my sweet Miss Rivers! if you are predetermined to find one; but surely you cannot name an instance in which I have not imposed a suffering on myself, to maintain that respect you accuse me of wanting."

This was a mighty *mal-a-propos* stroke

of mine, and rather shows my passion than my prudence: but, truth to say, well as I thought I had conned my part, like a poor devil of an actor on the first performance of a doubtful piece, no sooner did I behold the umpire, than every studied sentence at once evaporated, and nature, pure nature, did the rest.

"This instance, my Lord," said the hard-hearted charmer, "will amply suffice."

I saw her too self-collected for my hopes, and could only conciliate.

"Indeed, my dear Miss Rivers," cried I in a soothing tone, "you now carry discretion to prudery.—Have I not hitherto submitted implicitly to your determinations? Allow me, at least, the painful merit of obedience; and, as my reward, grant me a few, a very few minutes' conversation. Were the whole world witnesses of what is passing, is it possible that you could have any thing to apprehend?"

"The world takes as little interest in me, my Lord, as I do in that. I live to my own heart; and, since I dare not hope to gain any other applause, I ought carefully to guard all I can ensure."

"A caution so rigid is unworthy of an understanding like yours."

"It can hardly be more humbled, my Lord, than by such a compliment. My understanding is ever equal, believe me, to doubting itself; and too haughty to endure the doubts of others."

"It is too conscious of its own rights ever to excite them."

"Pardon me, my Lord, if I am tempted to tell you, that the first step towards deserving the doubts of the good, is to be indifferent to their commendations. Since I came into this house, my situation has ever been embarrassing, distressing, irksome. Even at this moment I know not how to act, so as to avoid the reproaches of my own heart. While I could flatter myself that your Lordship's attention sprung only from politeness, how honour-

ed did I think myself in being its object! Now, on the contrary ——"

She paused, overwhelmed with confusion at having been the first to present to the mind of either so dangerous an idea; and, perhaps, thus exposing herself to hear more than she knew how to answer. Never was passion and sensibility more exquisitely obvious than in this critical pause. My eyes followed those sweet ones, that, turning from me, sought the ground; and we both, at one moment, were attracted by a shagrin miniature picture-case;—both eagerly stooped for it, but, as it was nearest to me, I caught up the prize; for such I concluded it to be, by the animated efforts which she made to snatch it from me—not heeding, in her trepidation, her usual severe decorum: but this made me only grasp it more firmly. A terror, which I could not account for, was mingled with her confusion. Having tired her delicate hands, I put mine behind me; still trifling with her efforts, but fixed not to give up, without

satisfying my curiosity, the resemblance of some happy lover, with whom I gaily reproached her.

"Were your suspicion just, my Lord, I know not why it should distress me; but I can with truth assure you, the original of that picture neither now is, nor ever can be, any thing to me.—Surely that will satisfy you."

"No, my sweet girl! nothing will but a look."

"And what right have you—"

"The decisive right, Miss Rivers, as lawyers say—possession!"

"Indeed, my Lord, this contest is no jest to me; and one which I must think very unworthy your politeness."

I now made another effort to open the case, and Cecilia one equally alert to snatch it from me;—nay, she had very nearly succeeded; but I again put my hands behind me: hers still eagerly pursued the prize, till her glowing cheek almost touched mine. I could not resist the impulse that led me to kiss it. Spring-

ing back in a moment, with an air of inexpressible disdain, she seemed to lose, in the sense of indignity, the recollection of the object for which she had so importunately struggled.

"How, how, my Lord!" sighed she, when she could recover voice enough to utter a word, "have I deserved that you should treat me thus? Yet, alas! I fear I ought rather to reproach myself for having given you the opportunity! O how am I punished, my dear Amelia, for the preference I ventured to give my own weak judgement over yours!"

Overwhelmed with agitation, she sunk into a seat, and sobbed in silence. I recollected too well the lady thus apostrophised must be a worthy curate's wife, of whom my charmer had, in hours of confidence, spoken very partially. It is plain this Amelia, having put her own virtue in good keeping, fails not to look sharply out for that of her friend.

I had thus, as I thought, full power, if not permission, to peep into the picture-

case; when now the charmer more solemnly arose, and, laying her trembling hand on mine, once more addressed me.—

"Hold, my Lord! I conjure you hold, and recollect yourself! You are on the point of mortifying, of afflicting me, without procuring to yourself one moment of pleasure! I am sensible, too late, of the folly of opposing my strength to yours—it gives you, perhaps, an excuse for making me severely so: yet, if you have politeness, if you have honour—nay, if you have only humanity—you will not farther wound the feelings of her who would suffer, much rather than wound yours!"

Adjurations so fervent, on so trifling an occasion, only confirmed a suspicion which had through the whole kept possession of my mind—namely, that this was certainly some miniature of myself; and as, without proof of her partiality, it was vain to hope that I should obtain an acknowledgement from her, I

must have been an absolute idiot, had I given up my purpose.

"This is the only request, my dear Cecilia, that I should find it possible to deny you; but I have long, long languished to know who has been happy enough to find the way to such a heart; nor can I resist the opportunity."

"Then am I the most unfortunate wretch existing!" cried she, sinking into her chair again: "hateful in my own eyes, and insulted by those —— (O what eloquence was there in the pause, ere she added) I never injured!"

To find a likeness of myself, could of course be no surprise; but to see a picture which I had given to Lady Killarney, so astonished me, that I was on the point of telling more on that subject than was any way necessary or expedient. How Cecilia should get it, without the assistance of some imp, I could not guess: however, I have since had the vexation of discovering, that, by my own carelessness, she not only got at

the picture, but the whole mind of the irascible fury who returned it to me. As soon as I could conquer my own confusion, I sank at her feet, and, seizing her hands, repeatedly kissed and pressed them to my heart, sighing out—

"Cecilia! my adored Cecilia! am I then so happy, so distinguished!"

She half opened those charming eyes which had shut me out in vexation, and, with a look of tender humility, faintly repeated—

"Leave me, my Lord!—leave me, I conjure you, to that contempt I merit from all the world, and have already found, where, perhaps, I was weak enough least to expect it!"

"Ah! why this injustice, dearest of creatures, either to yourself or me? Pardon the impulse of a jealousy at once vague and powerful enough to conquer mere politeness. My heart, thus relieved from its doubts, throbs with a passion worthy even of her who excites it."

"Do you not, even at this moment,

despise me? Already you venture to talk to me of a passion to which my own folly has given rise, and which honour requires you should forget, or bury in oblivion. But why should we argue, when argument is itself a crime!"

"Nay, now, my Cecilia, your severity knows no bound. Have I said aught that honour will not justify? Have I ventured to take any advantage of a discovery so dear? Am I not sunk humbly at your feet?"

"But how low have you sunk my mind, my Lord?—beneath your feet! You have, in one moment, robbed me of that self-esteem I never knew before to value! Yet let me, as I ought, arraign only myself! Who, who shall after this assert that it is possible to live in habits of confidence with a man whom you could love without shame, anguish, humiliation! Keep a picture which I acquired by means sufficiently contemptible, and restore by means yet more so:—I have no longer a wish to call it mine! Let me retire, my Lord!—why

should you further insult or detain me? Save yourself in my esteem, and let me find my punishment only in my own failure!"

Drowned in tears, wholly lost in melancholy contemplations, no trace of weakness lived in her eye; her very nature was inaccessible to a pleasure that her principles could not justify. Virtue seemed, by long habitude, to have become a passion in her heart; and, indeed, the leading one: yet love was visibly blended with it, though I saw the strength of her tenderness only in its effects. Sitting down by her, I soothed her wounded mind with all the homage which her superior character demanded. Whether my soothings insensibly became too impassioned, or she suddenly recovered all her severe prudence, I cannot guess; but after drawing her chair several times farther from mine, she started up, and hastened to the door; hardly, however, had she time to know that it was fast, ere, leaning my back against it, I insisted on a hearing.

"What, Lord Westbury," cried she

with recovered firmness, "can you have to say that I ought to hear?"

"A thousand, thousand things; all too eager for any to be distinct."

"Improve this opportunity, my Lord; ruin yourself in my esteem, and debase me to the utmost! I have been detected in one error, and therefore am liable to be suspected of many!"

"Pardon me, my sweet Cecilia, if I have been reduced, by the strictness of your conduct, to violate decorum, or offend a purity which is in my eyes, of all your charms, the greatest! But the absence you threaten—my own cruel, hopeless situation!"——

"My Lord!—"

"Fear nothing, my love; and only allow me a full, a fair hearing!—I claim it of your justice! This happy hour has soothed my heart with the hope of an affection which must ever be its pride, although cruelly ordained at the same moment to become its affliction! My hand, long since childishly bestowed on a woman

whose despicable conduct has wholly alienated my heart, I had, when we met, only a heart to bestow; that fond, that faithful heart flew to your bosom as its natural home; yet I uttered not a word—I imposed a silence!—"

"Which, if indeed you loved me," cried the dear creature in an agony of tears, "would be eternal. Ah, wherefore dwell on such recollections! Revert no more to hours which I have no use for life but to lament!"

"O no, Cecilia! that would be too hard a fate for us both! The bright days of youth and passion must not thus be annihilated. Generous hearts make laws for themselves, nor are governed by those of the vulgar;—let such assert their own choice, and enjoy a happiness but the more exquisite for being unknown and unsuspected."

No words can express the dismay that seemed to seize Cecilia. She gazed on me a moment in cold and silent astonishment.

"My God, do my senses deceive me!"

cried she at last; "or do I live to hear Lord Westbury avow himself a libertine? Hence, unworthy man! you have no longer a charm for my eyes! You have found, nay you may still find, women who can receive and return a passion not pure enough to centre in one object.—There wanted but this to restore me to myself! —I had a father, my Lord, who was virtue personified. The principles which God gave me, strengthened alike by his precepts and example, early became a part of my existence. Not even you can shake them!—Leave me, Lord Westbury!—Leave me!"

The dignity of her mind seemed to dilate her fragile form, and too surely added to all its graces. I could not thus part; and with some determination said—

"Miss Rivers, you make me desperate; sit down, and give me the hearing you promised."

Her heart obeyed the decisive tone, though she trembled in complying.

"Why should you imagine me a man

so abandoned? Prevail on your heart to impute my error rather to my situation than choice. Fain would I approve what alone can bless me with you! But since so true and tender a tie strikes you with horror, since a ceremony merely civil, and which owes all its force to the sincerity of the vow pronounced, appears so holy in your eyes, I shall not pursue the painful subject; yet must I ever regret that even an apostle could contract, in a single instance, a mind capable of the most liberal expansion on every other. I will struggle to conform to your pleasure, since it must be so, and endeavour to exist without you. Yet, surely, it will be no crime to hope that the chances of life will one day enable me to hallow in your own way the vow with which my soul binds itself thus to yours. O, make that vow mutual, my sweet Cecilia!" added I, falling at her feet; "be mine!—for ever mine!—mine only!"

"Generous Lord Westbury!" cried she, shaking off as it were a painful dream,

while the tears yet swimming in her eyes were by love converted to a sparkling brilliance, "you have retrieved my esteem! You have indeed found the way to win me! I no longer hesitate to avow a tenderness which has hitherto been only the source of inexpressible anguish! You," half turning from me, as she pressed her white hand on her heart, with a grace she alone possesses, "you are its only object! A heart is wholly your own, from which this hand shall never be separated! May the generous passion that thus binds our souls to each other, refine and cherish in either bosom every virtue—so shall both be prepared for whatever lot God shall appoint us!"

I took the human privilege of sealing this celestial vow with an embrace; which, I am sorry to add, considerably reduced my heroics, by reminding me, that, after all, we were both mere mortals, and life a very uncertain possession. Yet, to overcome my sweet girl's scruples I knew was a vain hope, and to over-rule them a

base one. To guard both her and myself from the madness of the moment, I had made my own house, deliberately, the scene of trial; and I have rejoiced a thousand times at this, perhaps necessary, precaution.

The dear creature now gave way to a pleasure so pure and so exquisite, that my very soul enjoyed it. I retained one hand, nay, sometimes both, and was allowed to sit down by her.

"Thus sweetly affianced to her whom I adore," cried I, "she ought to know all now passing in the heart which she has deigned to accept. Can I suffer the wife of my choice, the worshipped of my soul, to remain subjected to the weak, vain woman whom I have unhappily invested with my title! Condescend, my Cecilia, to make that fortune at once your own which I can only enjoy when I share it with you! Appear in the world with that distinction I think due at once to you and to myself; nor imagine, that, in thus indulging my just pride and sensibility, you shall be

bound by one stipulation injurious to your honour or your peace."

"Can you make this conclusion, when you would involve me in dependence? Gratitude, my Lord, is the most dangerous of all emotions to a generous nature; and I think well enough of my own to fear it."

"Dear, ingenuous Cecilia! yet, surely, in this you refine too far!"

"Pardon me, my Lord, if, after admitting all your influence, I feel compelled to decide against your judgement; an innate sense of propriety bids me resolutely conform to my own condition in life, unless unforeseen circumstances should one day raise me to yours. Although denied the gratification of making you the arbiter of my conduct, be assured that it shall never disgrace you, unless a due exertion of our faculties should be thought to occasion shame. Soothed in the idea that Lord Westbury would, on reflexion, have chosen me as the companion of his life, to a recollection so sweet I shall resort

under every trial, every affliction; and make his welfare here and hereafter my incessant prayer, even though my own may never be included in it."

"Intuitive, animated philosophy! admirable Cecilia!" cried I, straining her once more to my bosom, while she seemed hardly able to subdue the melancholy turn of her own emotions. Yet, even at this moment, while beholding, hearing her with admiration, a weak, unworthy wish throbbed at my heart, and overruled its nobler impulses.—Never, never let a woman hope to satisfy a lover by acknowledging his power; that only inflames and centres those vague and wandering wishes which fancy alone before supported, and leads us to dare the utmost. Cecilia felt her danger, and would have withdrawn from my grasp; but I obstinately retained her.

"I would be wise, my love!" sighed I in a voice almost inarticulate; "I would be good! I would be all you wish! but Nature, too, asserts her claim, and tells me

to be happy! O, grant some indulgence to a passion which every moment increases! Partake its enthusiasm, and give me now, even now, my Cecilia, the bliss you allow me one day to hope for—add gratitude to the charm of love! So shall I be yours, be only, ever yours, by every tie which is in my eyes dear or holy!"

"Oh God, what will become of me!" cried the charmer in a tone of bitter distress. "Can you resolve to make me already repent my confidence in your honour!"

"Confide in it still, my Cecilia; confide in it ever—safely you may!"

I spoke with a determination that called for all the energy of her character; nor did it desert her.

"Hear me, my Lord! in turn, hear me! deny me not the justice you even now claimed. I see your design: alas! too plainly I see it must have been from the first a design! Have pity on her whom you have made already beyond comparison wretched! Oblige me not to

owe that protection to your family I deign to supplicate from yourself: yet even that desperate hope will I try, if you reject my prayers, and ungenerously persist!"—Her soft and fragile form now, in a moment, seemed to sublime into air, as, escaping from my arms, she sunk at my feet.—"I bow, Lord Westbury, before your humanity! I make that my protection! I am an unprotected, wretched orphan; a very desolate young woman, with no pleasure but my innocence, no pride but my honour! yet, alas! my Lord, I am only a woman; and of these you may, perhaps, bereave me, if you can resolve to be completely a villain! You may have power enough to render me a miserable apostate to my father, and to my God, for the few days that I could support such a fate!—Alas! they would be very, very few! for were you all that you imagine yourself, and could crown me with every worldly advantage, grief and despair, at not deserving them, would some how or other end me. Dare you destroy her

here, and perhaps hereafter, who thus generously loves you; and that for a temporary gratification of your senses? You have reason, you have generosity, you have honour in other instances—O, call on them all, at this moment, to subdue a wish so wild and unworthy! Then, to tenderness, my heart will join admiration and wonder. Yet, ah! that tenderness which thus induces me to implore my safety from yourself, is a claim more touching than any I can urge, if you wish to live and die in peace with God and your own conscience!"

This elevated, affecting address was enforced by every power of broken pathos; while its consistency proved it to be the genuine impulse of her own pure heart. With it all strength, all attempt at resistance ended, save that she hung upon my hands, which she chastely kissed, and by the floods of tears with which she bedewed them purified my nature from any loose idea. Who, indeed, could have cherished such? Pride, passion, anger, I

might have been tempted to overbear; but such a meek display of every feminine grace, and humble fearful virtue, even at the moment when she had her own emotions to contend with as well as mine, none but a monster could have resisted. I raised the fallen flower with devoted reverence, and forgot at once to be a villain.

"Pardon, my sweet Cecilia, an unconscious effort; or allow for my cruel situation. No, never did I wish to make you mine but with your own consent; and it is you, alone, who know how to subdue! I would fain hope that it is not in my nature to injure the being who relies on me; but, were I capable of such baseness, you should be my last victim. Recover yourself, my only beloved! Oh, how do those floods of bitter tears reproach me! Never, I solemnly swear, will I draw forth another voluntarily! You have conquered me! I am, from this moment, a reasonable lover—the convert of your merits! Sit down, my sweetest love, and let us

calmly arrange the future, to set your heart and my own more at ease!"

All this was mighty fine talking; but the dear girl had felt even to the remotest fibre of her too-sensible heart; nor could she thus suddenly be herself again. Her charming eyes, no longer finding pleasure in meeting mine, were fixed heavily on the carpet, and she even sobbed hysterically whenever she sighed. Yet this she treated slightly, as a constitutional infirmity; nor would allow her heart to have the smallest share in the severe emotion.

Every moment did she reiterate her request that I would leave her; but far from intending compliance, I persisted in talking away the tears which she still at intervals continued to shed. I was too much occupied by my subject to attend to the tone of my voice; and though hers was in the lowest key, I fear mine was in *alto*. In the midst of, as I thought, a most eloquent harangue on my part, up started my Cecilia, with an agitated air.

"Oh, heavens!" cried she, "Mrs. Ellison!—Do not you hear her, my Lord? I am undone, if she finds you with me!" I took the hint, and retreated to a favourite hiding-place which I lately discovered, as I suppose Cecilia concluded that I should; not without devoutly wishing my fidgeting old housekeeper fairly deposited in one of her own pickling-jars. How wisely I looked, when, from the verge of the window-curtain, I perceived immediately afterwards that no human being was at the door, but my charmer on full flight down the stairs, I leave you to imagine. I execrated my own egregious credulity in crediting an artifice which I could not but admit virtue herself dictated. Happily my sweet girl will not be so much inclined to laugh at this simplicity as half her thoughtless sex would.

I knew full well that it would be vain to hope she would return unaccompanied; and, cross enough at heart, retreated to my solitary apartment. I have passed an almost sleepless night in inditing you this

laconic epistle;—perhaps my Cecilia is employed in much the same manner.

What a rational, judicious man must this good girl's father have been! By teaching her to distrust herself, he has saved her the chance of ever incurring her own reproaches. How important too, in the female character, is the force of habit; it is a line of circumvallation which prevents our assailing the very outworks of chastity.

Yet women, whom we sometimes find most capable of exertion in points of moment, do we weak vain wretches presume to place second in the scale of creation. Soon shall we find, when, by the liberal care of their parents, they share with us the advantages of cultivated intellect, with what a grace they will unite the charm of each sex in themselves.

I am half afraid that you should see my Cecilia; for though to my eyes and heart she has every perfection of which nature is capable, I know you look for the letter of beauty, while I adore the spirit: yet could

you not deny her both, when you have talked with her half an hour; for, as the poet exquisitely says—

"Mind! mind! alone—bear witness earth and heaven—
The living fountains in itself contains
Of beauteous and sublime!"

I am sorry, methinks, to quit the heroics; but a kind of an earthy, groveling inclination yet hangs about me. I will address my Cecilia, and try if through her I again can soar.

Yours, ever,
WESTBURY.

LETTER XXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

OH, my Amelia! from what have I not escaped since yesterday evening!—from Lord Westbury—alas! from myself, too!—from all that could charm, all that could destroy me! I acknowledge, with

humility, your better judgement. I will make it, henceforth, the rule of mine. I blush at the obstinacy with which I have so long closed my heart to the tender admonitions of a faithful friend. Ah, how will she rejoice to find that my only reason for blushing!—Let me relieve my overcharged soul, and pour forth all its sentiments to my Amelia!—yes, to that chosen depositary, your heart, I freely commit the very weaknesses of mine! Whether you approve or condemn, I must speak, and I will ever do it sincerely.

I am even now too much agitated to retrace the conversation which led me to the very verge of destruction. Yet I owned not to Lord Westbury that I loved him;—needless acknowledgment, where only words are wanting!

How was I punished for secreting the miniature I mentioned, when I saw it become a silent but indubitable evidence of my tenderness! No longer mistress enough of my mind to use one subterfuge, I stood

before him a self-convicted criminal, sinking into the earth with confusion. Ah, think of the consequences of this dangerous discovery!—to see Lord Westbury kneel, sigh, supplicate. It was not the bold, the insolent, the presuming lover, whom I had to contend with; pride would then have ensured my safety. It was the most lovely, the most insinuating of mankind urging all that heart-felt influence of which he knew himself possessed, and breathing the dictates of a guilty passion, in the language of Virtue herself. Even now the image lives before my eyes, and with a culpable delight I dwell on the recollection. I see him yet at my feet, lovely as I find him in my heart. He had been at the birthday-ball, and every native grace was heightened by magnificence. His clothes, happily chosen, gave improved clearness to a complexion beautifully lighted up by youth, hope, desire, and a feeling for me even stronger than every other; while his eyes, now sparkling with impatience, now languishing

with softness, assumed with each impression a new and more interesting charm. Ah, well may you tremble for me at this dangerous moment! Half lost in a chaos of fear and emotion, I found my very soul incline to the sweet violence with which he drew me towards him. Sentiment conspired with sense to betray me, by representing him as worthy all that my partiality could bestow. One thought alone intervened between me and ruin, and Heaven instantaneously brought it to my aid in all its force. "Lord Westbury is his own no longer," said my conscience: "Respect the most sacred tie of God and nature!" The monitor struck on my heart, and the animating blush, which had a moment before confused every faculty, was extinct at once; a sudden chill braced every nerve, and I conquered by daring to think it possible that I might conquer. Yet, oh! sighed my heart, let me owe my safety to the generous man who sought of myself alone to win me! I turned instantaneously against himself the

impassioned eloquence which he had so well known how to employ. Who but a monster can be proof against the object beloved, in the attitude of fond supplication? I knew it was not possible that Lord Westbury should be so. Pure as my own, were the tears that mingled with them, when, raising, he told me I was safe. I almost fancied the return of reason and virtue diffused a living ray of heaven, a kind of glory over his whole person.

It is true that I could be in no danger, except from myself, in a house where every creature would have flown to my aid; but to have been reduced to the necessity of avowing such a danger, would have irretrievably sunk him in my opinion; while I should have been the victim, at last, of calumny. No, I could not have survived so bitter a disappointment! for in his excellence alone am I proud—of his charms alone am I vain!

How exquisite were the moments that followed! Alas! deeply grieved was I

to shorten, by a severe but necessary prudence, the mutual though dangerous indulgence!

Happy to be elevated in the eyes of Lord Westbury, I can hardly regret, now it is past, a trial that must leave him without a doubt either of his own influence or my principles. Secure at once of my love and my virtue, his tenderness, I would fain hope, will be kept alive by convictions so impressive, when rigid duty compels me to leave him only recollection to support his passion. Oh, my Amelia! should the hour ever arrive when heaven permits him to make another choice, a solemn and mutual engagement unites him to your Cecilia! The dear, the awful vow has passed my lips, and never, never shall it be violated! Never, I again swear, most adored of men, shall this hand be given to another! If a severe destiny forbids me to be thine, I will wither away in unceasing affection, and, to the last breath I draw, my prayers shall rise for thee! Ah, how vain the

supposition that it could be violated, when the whole universe supplies not another Westbury!

What are all the transient raptures of a guilty passion, to the sacred consciousness of having withstood them! By this means, and this alone, levelled with the distinguished choice of my heart, I raise my eyes without fear to his; certain that each will reflect to the other a tenderness we may bear into eternity. Amelia, I presume a little on my triumph. Ah, grant me this small indulgence! To all around me I appear a wandering, an abstracted being—you, alone, know me for an enlivened one.

Am I now reinstated in your favour? Without looking back for causes of distrust, rely on me, when I promise to be all you wish hereafter. I have resolved, torturing as the effort is, to fly Lord Westbury's presence. Ah, no! it were madness to hold more than a correspondence with him, unless heaven itself, by an unlooked for event, should authorise

our attachment! I vow this on your faithful bosom; and when I break this vow, may the chosen of my soul forget his!—a punishment beyond all others in the idea of your

CECILIA RIVERS.

P.S. I made up my mind to wait on Lady Westbury, and request my dismission, ere I again beheld my Lord. I was, indeed, unable this morning, at any rate, to appear at breakfast. Lady Westbury was surprised at my avowed motive for soliciting to see her; and rather haughtily required my reasons for giving up the charge of her daughters. I urged want of health; of which she might judge by my looks. She offered me the advice of her own physician, and seemed offended at my declining the favour: nay, she was good enough to tell me that I might take the children, and set out immediately for Arlington, if air would benefit me. Not even this proposal could I accede to. She then surveyed me, I thought, with a se-

vere, examining eye:—perhaps it was mere consciousness gave me the idea. Alas! an ingenuous heart droops under the least secret, and half betrays itself. She suffered me, however, to make my parting compliments, and in a few days I *go*.—O the misery contained in that little word!

LETTER XXVIII.

TO MISS RIVERS.

THE night which I thought would be eternal is at length past; and morning brings me—not my Cecilia!—ah, no! she deigns no longer to preside at that table, where she made a simple repast luxury. Tedious have been the hours which I have passed, since we parted, in all the restless irresolution of unsatisfied love. —Alas! I sometimes fancy that I have been wanting to myself, and too easily discouraged. Pardon, then, my once

more attempting to soften the chosen of my soul, while her absence leaves me power of recollection, and my fond heart, no longer oppressed by sympathy with her soft fears, is capable of exerting its little reason, its little eloquence.

Oh! most lovely, most beloved of women! if you, composed of every gentle grace, have a reserve of fortitude which may enable you to overcome these distracting emotions, by sex or philosophy, pity a man who has no resource in either! He seeks in vain to refine nature to calmness, or preserve a silence exacted only by a mistaken delicacy! Modes of thinking so distinct as yours and mine on one single point, while our characters assimilate in every other, can spring only from custom: and how often, my Cecilia! do we make for ourselves the decorums that enslave us?—Nature ordained us not thus to dread each other!—She institutes no ideal horrors: and in giving man the bold privilege of entreating, she left to woman the softer one of yielding to his

prayers.—How can I be justified in remaining silent?—Can I have a proper sense of your various merits and charms, and not give words to my feelings?—That rare candour, generosity, and purity, so conspicuous in the scene of yesterday, will only embitter my fate, if my Cecilia is yet inexorable!—The more deserving I find you, the less can I exist without you; and how will you deny compassion to an extravagance which your virtues first occasioned, and your tenderness increases?

Oh! why did you acknowledge that I reigned in an incomparable heart, till then the sole boundary of my wishes?—I have no longer the power of limiting them!—This precious pledge of so rich a treasure only makes me restless and miserable, till I can call the whole my own: and, ah! at what a vast and uncertain distance am I now thrown from it!—Surely I have a right to appeal against a sentence which only lost its severity in the sweetness of the judge's voice!—I

now am but too sensible to the cruelty of my situation: I now feel how entirely you have annihilated my taste for pleasures that once filled up my thoughtless days; yet refuse to give me, in yourself, a rich compensation for all those which I can no longer enjoy. Without you, how tedious, how insipid, will be my future existence!—Ah! if I cannot convince, yet, if you love me indeed, I may surely hope to charm to rest an imaginary scruple.—Yield, my adored Cecilia! be gracious!—Oh, yield! to sweeten and share those advantages which I can only find such with you; and I swear again—yes! on that glowing cheek, I once more solemnly swear—you shall have a public, an indubitable right to them, if ever I am again master of my fate!—You say that I know not the firmness of your mind. You know not the tenderness of mine, I may safely assert. Ever above that vulgar prejudice which makes men tremble to reward desert, only because they have a conviction of it, I shall, when my day

comes, with pride, with pleasure, return the generous confidence for which I now entreat!—Can you be so inexorable as to hear, unmoved, the voice of a favoured lover?—I have seen, through its natural snow, your faithful, your responsive heart beat!—Ah! why should it beat in vain? —Let your generosity speak, and your scruples must be silenced; even should they not, add to my gratitude, by a voluntary sacrifice of them!

How easily might you, by a lottery-prize, account to your friends for that change of situation which I shall think at once due to you and myself. I have an estate of a thousand a-year not entailed—it shall be your own, either by sale or settlement. I have an elegant house in town that shall be fitted up immediately for your reception: nor will I, if you so command, cross the threshold, even as a common visitor. Yet will I soothe my heart with the hope, that, in some chosen spot where no prying eyes shall pursue either, I may, at some happy

intervals, behold you:—yes, I shall sacrifice, without regret, the pleasure of passing my days in your society, to that of protecting you from all malice and observation.—With what transport shall I behold my heart's only idol gracing with her presence the round of amusements where I must worship her afar off!—The world will then discover all her merits and charms—for affluence opens the eyes of the many. Her liberal soul will then enjoy, to its extent, the transport of making happy those who look up to her. —Thousands will find my Cecilia born to save them; while even her Westbury will, through her, partake of blessings which he only, through her, could deserve. It is a virtue to be mine, my love! if it is a virtue to reclaim; for it is in your power to make the heart now so eagerly addressing you, all that you would have it be!

Ah! how shall I suggest to my Cecilia the delightful idea that our mutual tenderness might have living consequences without her suffering in situ-

ation! Even this might be, and the world out of the secret. Were I indeed happy enough to owe to her, breathing pledges of a love inestimably prized, would not the voluntary tie already uniting us be doubly endeared when so feelingly perpetuated! For the offspring of my heart, I should grow a miser of my fortune!—and, in a love the most lavish, would compensate to them and the adored being to whom I owed them, the advantages it is not in my choice to offer her.

You shall not rely on my faith, till the law becomes an indubitable test of my sincerity; and to that I will, even with your tacit consent, resort impatiently.

What more can a true, an impassioned heart urge?—Or how, if you now hear me unmoved, shall I ever hope to prevail! My hand is solemnly plighted to you!—my heart forever your own! Consider, that the weak woman who bears my title, has but my title; while I am wedded in soul to Cecilia Rivers! Remember, that

you are only implored to make a temporary sacrifice of a little feminine pride—a mere prejudice—in favour of a lover whose whole life will be spent in meriting the condescension; who will wait with impatience for the day when he may call upon the world to applaud and ratify that union, by which both his Cecilia and himself may long have been rendered happy.

Oh, with what joy should I introduce to my friends, as my bride, in the sight of men and angels, the charming woman who alone made me worthy either! If there is a transport beyond hearing her whom you adore universally admired, it must be the consciousness that she is worthy the fascinating distinction: and both will be mine in the highest degree.

Thus have I, my love, weighed and set before you every possible consequence of true affection, without discerning one which should induce you further to delay that happiness you have allowed the hope of to Your own

WESTBURY.

LETTER XXIX.

ANSWER.

IS it possible, my Lord, that you should deliberately thus address me? Is it possible that you thus employed those hours which I passed, sleepless, it is true, as you did, but in a happy contemplation of the promised future, when no severe duty might tear us from each other? Is it possible, I again ask, that you should have employed that interesting interval in collecting such base arguments, as tend to corrupt the heart through the medium of the understanding? Yet have you degraded yourself rather than me, in this unworthy attempt; and when I coolly tell you that I both despise and reject your licentious proposal, you will imagine what I feel. Do not, my Lord, again insult me with having given my heart to you. It was won by a noble and superior na-

ture, nor can devote itself to the man who exhausts shining talents to varnish over hollow and vicious arguments; whose judgement seems to be the dupe of his senses. Alas! must he not be contemptible as well as wretched, if once he submits to such masters?

Recall your wishes, my Lord, to their former boundary; for my weak partiality is, you may be assured, effectually cured by any voluntary depravity. O that I could controul the impetuosity of my temper! Alas, I am ashamed to feel that you can afflict while thus you offend me. Ah, God! is it then Lord Westbury who deliberately supposes innocence to have a price; and that the woman whom he loves has fixed one upon her own? Has he not known even himself, in the hour of wild passion, rejected by her who idolized him? What then can he hope from his fortune? Is it credible that you should be so little, so selfish, my Lord, in your fondness, as to attempt humbling to the dust the very humble being who excites it? Was it for

such a purpose Heaven lavished on you every personal and mental advantage; and to those added all the means of saving or destroying so many? Think, think in time, that great in proportion to the trust will be your condemnation, if thus you pervert Heaven's own best gifts!

You could, it seems, be satisfied if Cecilia Rivers was only supposed innocent! Good Heaven! how little do you know of her whom you profess to adore! I am marked, my Lord, by a haughty simplicity of character, which the world may term too decisive. I disdain to be thought any thing but what I am; and could I once resolve to deserve shame, I should with resignation endure it. Those specious appearances you colour so highly, would to me double the blushes of guilt and the blackness of infamy. If such are in reality your ideas of happiness and propriety, how could you venture to conclude that I should be brought to think with you? How could you hope that I should deliberately resolve to roll away a

gaudy existence in a dear-bought carriage, where I must know myself an artificial being, who daily shrouded in satin a corrupt heart, and whose life was all an iniquitous illusion? May I not claim your pardon, when I tell you that I was born in too humble a rank to inherit this mode of thinking; and introduced among those who do, too late to overcome my horror at opinions which I will suppose to be general in high life, as the best excuse I can make for your having adopted them. Yet this, perhaps, is but the remnant of my original weakness in your favour: for, do you not profess to disdain those "ideal horrors which we make for ourselves," and all the "slavery of public opinion!" Alas, my Lord! how much is my sex indebted to those rigid rules which yours disclaims! The severe boundary opinion sets to virtue, you have taught me to believe one of her greatest safeguards; since to venture but a single step beyond the line, is, I now know by sad

experience, to expose oneself to the most mortifying indignities.

You have affected, with singular address, to present to my agitated mind every consequence of an attachment unsanctioned by law and morality: but you well know how to pass over whatever makes not for your argument. I conquer the timidity, perhaps the delicacy, of my sex, to show you the integrity of my nature; for my imagination is, I own, not so inactive as to be circumscribed by yours. How can I fail, when I contemplate the union you represent as honourable, to see myself (what you, my Lord, shall never see me) the stigmatised mother of a nameless offspring, deprived by my weakness of every right in society? all those dear and sacred privileges which law and custom alone can now authorise even to nature! Ah, can I hear, in fancy only, these desolate and neglected children demand from me a name and a father, without sinking overwhelmed with

guilt, anguish, and confusion? It is thus Lord Westbury asks me to prove my love! It is thus that he is anxious to prove his own! But mine has been much overrated indeed, if you imagined that I should listen one moment, my Lord, to such an extravagant proposal; in which (as a specimen of your generosity) you make me so totally the victim. Because I voluntarily lavished on you a part of the little treasure which God bestowed on me, you deliberately resolve to rob me of the rest! Blush, Lord Westbury, blush at so shameful an abuse of your influence and your reason: and till you can remember her as she merits, forget a wretch whom your love first marked with that sad appellation, which your generosity only seeks to exchange for one yet more degrading.

Expose not yourself by seeking me in an evening: I fly—even my own heart; but shall never more be found in a lonely hour or place, by you. Alas! what a fate is mine!—and how much more in-

tolerable is it now become my duty to make it!

LETTER XXX.

TO MISS RIVERS.

YOUR letter, my sweet Cecilia, has reached me very safely: but how deeply has it shocked me! Have I deserved a bitterness and resentment so poignant? Ah! why, my love, take pleasure in misjudging a heart which most ardently adores you; and feels that adoration to be its only sin, towards God, the world, or yourself! Eloquence and sensibility, which were bestowed to enliven happiness, you delight to employ in torturing the lover who owns your power to be unlimited. Which of your severe reproaches can I obviate? But I can feel them all;—and I do most acutely feel them. No, my harsh love!—my obdurate Cecilia! you shall yet be obliged to confess that my heart was never little,

never selfish, in its tenderness. In the proposal which you censure so bitterly, I consulted your character and probable feelings, rather than my own; and am ready to prove to you, that I demanded not one sacrifice which I will not readily make. Consent but to be mine; share one fate with me, Cecilia!—and dictate the manner. I shall not oppose you in any resolution. Let a new system become the consequence of the tie. I will abandon with you the only country where either will be known, and receive from you the name which I ought to give you. Command my fortune;—direct my life;—all climates with you will be equal—and any appellation which you will deign to share with your unhappy lover. I shall never fail to do justice to your conduct; nor do I suppose, when my domestic disappointment is remembered, that the world will be severe on mine.

Have I at length been able to reconcile you to a wretch whom every thing conspires to grieve and mortify? Even in

the same house, am I not shut from you as by an enchanted circle? obliged to send a letter circuitously, and by an artifice?—to wait (while only a ceiling and a floor divide us) your answer in all the torments of suspense? Yet am I not without hopes, that it will now be the generous one I should dictate.

LETTER XXXI.

ANSWER.

FROM my earliest years to this moment, it has excited my wonder to find the passion of love so reprobated and censured by the wise of all times and ages. Ah! how could I guess, till sad experience taught me, the propriety of such harsh censures? Why, why, my Lord, will you not be the sublime creature I thought you? Why will you at once rack my heart, by descending from the height where I delighted to admire you, and give

to your poor frail Cecilia that superiority of which you rob yourself? If the extravagant turn of your last appeased my wounded pride, it doubly hurt my reason. You, you yourself are destined to become a warning to the heart that bows before you. Good Heaven! of what infinite importance is it to guard against the infatuation of passion, when thus it subjects the superior nature of Lord Westbury!—when he can forget, only to indulge a wild transport of fond but guilty tenderness, all the solid duties and claims of social life! Can a man of rank sin alone? Born to give rules to subordinate thousands, his error would become the example of one half of the community, and the jest of the other. No, my Lord! I cannot suffer you to buy misfortune and disgrace at such a price. The guilt of my misconduct would be doubled, if it thus became the apparent cause of yours.

Innocent and obscure as I was born, it is my hope that I may die—unless I may owe elevation to goodness.

Oh, my Lord! call in, as I do, self-esteem to your assistance! Recollect all the exertions of intellect and principle due to your character, and to society! Recollect, at the same moment, the pangs you make me suffer in the conflict! Think what may be the stings of a guilty, what the plaudits of an approving, conscience! And, if ever that head, so precious to my eyes and heart, should be destined to sink oppressed by sickness, on a pillow where it finds not repose—oh! let not one pang of repentance be added to those of malady! Never let your secret soul remind you, with cruel aggravation, that you have robbed one human being of health, innocence, or peace of mind! I think, yes, even now I think, my Lord, that you have a nature too noble to be distanced in the race of virtue.

More grieved, perhaps, than offended at your last extravagant proposition, the very infatuation which caused, extenuates that fault. To pass it over is, however, all that I can grant—yet believe me I seek to grant all I may—except the repe-

tition of the willing acknowledgments which I have already made you; that, when I am at liberty to hear you, I shall have no other pleasure; and that to think of you in the interval will be my only consolation. Alas, I must only think of you, my Lord! I cannot, any more than yourself, longer endure the restrictions to which both are in this enchanted circle subject. Shall I own to you that I have resolved not to endure them? Yet how, except by quitting this house, can I evince my sincerity, or ensure my safety? I have weighed well the past, and the future:—we may owe a first temptation to accident, a second only to choice. This conclusion is the simple result of virtue: and judge of her influence, when it counterpoises yours. Yes, I am fixed to go from this much-loved home. Vanity, pride, nay love itself, confirm my fond and fearful heart in this resolution, for I owe it to myself to deserve you.

The refined moralists of these days, I well know, trace every action into self:

love; and though I hope I am incapable of being actuated by so narrow a motive, I will not attempt to confute a prevalent opinion. But believe me, my Lord, if love of myself should unconsciously have induced me to reject your first proposal, the more powerful love I feel for you will render me for ever deaf to your second.

LETTER XXXII.

TO MISS RIVERS.

INCOMPARABLE Cecilia! who can love you, and retain one gross, one selfish idea? Who can know himself the beloved of such a heart, and not partake its elevation? I seek in vain for words that may convey my fond admiration of your exalted mind. Your very prejudices act upon my soul with the force of conviction—the charm of purity. Ah, how can I atone for the presumption of seeking to level with myself that enchanting crea-

ture whom I was born but to worship? Yes, my Cecilia! you may make me blush at my little, my selfish, arguments; but I cannot blush to find you rise above them. Ah, no! amid the throbs of disappointment, I glory in your pre-eminence.

Be happy, then, my best, my only love, your own way, since mine can never make you so. While I can see those eyes so dear to me, owing their sweetest expression to pleasure, I can never be without enjoyment. Yes, sense and self refine as I read your letters, and leave my bosom a temple worthy to enshrine the pure heart of my Cecilia. Ah, let it remain in that hallowed home! I cannot know sin with such a talisman to guard me.

But what means my love by talking of flying? You cannot entertain so inhuman an idea! Have I not acquiesced in every decision? Have I not submitted my very soul to a power so sublimely despotic? Can you think it necessary to put it out of the possibility of accident, to

bless me with a look? Will you not leave me at least the fancied indulgence of protecting you?—the fancied interest I flatter myself with, in your every thought! Why may I not breathe the same air, or sleep under the same roof? Where is the impropriety in my thus remotely remaining your friend, your protector? Can you indeed love, and yet cherish these idle apprehensions, these extravagant cautions? Ah, no, Cecilia!—love and fear are incompatible: and all the partiality you avow for me is so cold, so very rational, that a little time, a little severity to yourself, and it vanishes. My love, alas! burns through every vein, and incessantly claims you. Said I, that love knows not fear?—Alas! I tremble while thus avowing my feelings.

You think me, perhaps, too happy in tracing your studies, from the disorder of those books which it is one of my chief pleasures to replace after you. Could you know how often I kiss the cold covers because your fingers have touched them!—

You think me too much gratified in making my girls lisp out that name, in infantine fondness, to which my heart so sweetly vibrates. Alas! those little ones have the power of delighting, by means as casual as this, him whom they yet know not how to flatter. But it is the will of my Cecilia to leave me without even these trifling, these innocent pleasures;—to leave the sweet children, who are in one sense orphans, to be educated by chance, while she voluntarily takes from them the benefit of her example. Ah, Cecilia!—you forget that those children are mine!

But why do I thus urge you?—All your resolutions are unalterable: I, at least, never had power to change one. Yet the heart is the only monitor; and if that is silent, I would not wish to prevail.

LETTER XXXIII.

ANSWER.

UNJUST and cruel! Ah, my Lord! ought you not to know that I have neither deserved your extravagant praises, nor reproaches? You surely take pleasure in the exertion of your power, and find an indulgence in the bitterness of my affliction! Alas! that resolution which you affect to impute to my indifference is the utmost effort of my duty;—the most decisive proof of my attachment. Is there another of your sex on earth, from whom I should find it necessary to fly? You, only you, of all mankind, could awaken in me those apprehensions which gratitude should rather induce you to sooth than increase. But delicacy is not a characteristic of your sex; nor know you how that of a woman may be wounded by a single word.

I really think you are determined, my Lord, entirely to distract me. "I forget that the children endeared to my very soul are yours,"—you unkindly tell me. How can I forget it, while they are so lovely? If, in the sincerity of their little hearts, they speak of the tears I every hour shed over them; the impassioned caresses I lavish;—what excuse can you make to yourself for so cruel an aspersion? You can never know, for it is not possible your heart should expand with the softness of that of a woman, the inestimable pleasure which I am reduced to deny myself, when I give up the charge of your daughters; the exquisite delight I could take in forming them to resemble in mind, as in person, their father; and in fondly fancying that my cares daily heighten the natural likeness. But a fate so blest was not ordained for me. The heart is, as you observe, my Lord, the best monitor; and mine submits to cruel conviction. Yet, oh! forget not that I fly but to preserve my own esteem, and ensure yours.

LETTER XXXIV.

TO MISS RIVERS.

STILL nobly obstinate!—affectingly sincere! By what imperceptible charm is it that my Cecilia makes her very denials too flattering to offend? You still love me then!—Yes, you deign again to sooth me with that sweet acknowledgment; to indulge my soul with the fond repetition!—Ah, had you seen the enraptured phrensy with which I now kissed, and now re-read, your last exquisite letter, you would at once have known the excess of my passion, and your own boundless influence.

From this moment I will avail myself of your bright example, and at least deserve the happiness which I may yet one day claim. Surely the time will come, when you will no longer drive me from your feet;—when I may unchecked pour

forth there all the ardours of my soul! Oh, my lovely, my adored Cecilia! never while I.....Ah, what am I attempting? It is beneath a true and an unalterable passion, to bind itself by the vulgar tie of vows. No, most beloved! You will, I know, judge my heart by the generous one in your own bosom; and might with reason question my fidelity, did I use the common arts of common lovers.

But why, Cecilia, are you so rigidly polite? Why the wearisome formality of my title? Have I any I can ever value like that of your lover? Call me your Edward, your Westbury, and thus give me indeed distinction! I almost hate a name that brought me at first chagrin and mortification;—that even now interferes with my dearest hopes, and removes me from her whom I adore. I claim, in this small instance, your compliance; but I must urge a right to it in a point of more importance:—it is a last request. Cecilia!—you cannot refuse your Edward's last request!

In those hours of social converse when every word which either uttered sunk deep into the soul of the other,—how sweet was it to me to learn that my Cecilia had in Mrs. Forrester a sister-heart—a dear and chosen friend, who I have sometimes thought was more beloved than a jealous tenderness can allow! She is happily, respectably married.—Since, then, all entreaty is vain; since I must resolve to resign you; let it, my Cecilia, be to the protection of those dear friends, the Forresters! That, after my own, is the one which I would choose for you. The conviction of your being safe and at ease with them, will a little relieve my heart from the fears and jealousies which, I already feel, must otherwise embitter my hours from the moment I lose sight of you.

Yet think not that I can reconcile myself to your accepting a home with your friends. In being mine, you have an ample fortune at command: but, as I know the noble pride of your nature, I will not force you to receive, even from

myself, more than the means of avoiding dependence. Two hundred a-year, on my Yorkshire estate, is already yours; I executed the writings an hour since. I have limited your income to a mere existence, that you may have no excuse to your own heart for wounding mine by a refusal:—you will, you must, accept this little proof of a regard in which self is not blended.—I know not these envied friends; I never shall know them but with my Cecilia's permission: yet I number them already among those whom I most value; for they can do more for my beloved than her Westbury can—ah! how much more!

Go then, Cecilia, since you are determined to go, to a favourite, an elegant retirement;—and, oh! in solitude, in society, in every hour, in every place, cherish alike the image of your Edward!—Neither time, nor business, nor pleasure, shall ever dim yours in his heart for even one moment; and all the indulgence he demands, is that of corresponding with

you. Can this offend the severity of your decorum; or affect, in the remotest degree, that reputation which it is my delight, as well as interest, to preserve unsullied? —Let me not be obliged to suppose your rectitude carried to affectation; and if every request I make meets alike with a denial, what can I conclude?—To your acquiescence in the present instance I limit my hopes, though not my wishes; and in granting it you will make the favour mine.

P.S. I am going to select some airs, which may exercise the touching graces of your voice, that one hour of my life may yet be employed in your service. Believe me, Cecilia! I deem all lost which I do not so employ. With the music I shall seal up the writings.

LETTER XXXV.

ANSWER.

YOU term my conduct *noble obstinacy*, my Lord.—What can I call yours but barbarous generosity? Why, why will you thus distress me with bounty which it is impossible I should sanction?—No: I should indeed be unworthy your heart, were mine mean enough for dependence! That invaluable heart is all I will at present accept of you; and my own, all I will at present bestow.—Why do you oppress me with these afflicting obligations, and add to my sufferings by terming propriety pride? You found me humble enough: it is my respect, my love for you, that now renders me otherwise.

You soothe me in speaking with such interest of my Amelia and her amiable husband; but you are not yet acquainted

with the matron-dignity of her mind. Were I to retire to her house on terms like those you propose, I can hardly hope that she would approve a conduct which she might not venture to condemn:—but for Mr. Forrester, he could not struggle with that integrity, and frank piety of mind, which would at once impel him to tell me I was wrong. Yet, even admitting those dear friends were silent, or believed me irreproachable, what would be the conjectures of all my former associates, when they found me to be possessed of an independence acquired in a secret manner? We generally see the world ungenerous enough to assign the worst possible reason for every occurrence that cannot be traced to its real one; and how could I wave all inquiry? or how endure the malice of endless surmises? Liberality is a mere term with most people; and few indeed will allow to another that virtue in which they feel themselves deficient: were it to transpire that I owed even a trifling income to you, what impu-

tations, what humiliations, must I not encounter! And if fortune hereafter gives you the power to raise me to yourself, I should be considered as a wretch long since made unworthy the distinction, and you as the dupe of my artifice. First may I labour for the meanest subsistence! If the invariable desire of preserving a spotless heart and reputation may be termed pride, then, indeed, am I the proudest of my sex; but well I know that Lord Westbury can make the delicate distinction.

Pardon me if I have destroyed the parchment; and spare me, from this moment, the necessity of these killing refusals.

Yet am I not determined to refuse every request you make me.—Ah, no! it is, perhaps, my misery to refuse any.—If you will be guarded in corresponding with me, I shall gladly submit every future action of my life to your knowledge. Alas! what would it avail, were the whole world to applaud me, if in your

heart a single doubt lurked of my conduct?—Such an adviser, such a friend, will be a felicity indeed; yet remember that I cannot allow you to take any other title.—Now you, surely, have not a shadow of complaint to bring against me?

Are all men selfish in the article of love? You amplify on the pains you suffer, regardless of those you inflict. I have, perhaps, a nature more exquisitely susceptible of anguish than your own; but when did I ever make so cruel a use of its effusions?

Assure yourself, that, however my style may alter, my heart never will; and that though I dare not now venture on so dear an indulgence, I shall think myself too happy if I am ever permitted to call Lord Westbury *my Edward!*

LETTER XXXVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

ALAS, my Amelia! what a life is mine at present! My whole soul is continually in tumults, either against others or myself!—Oh! read the enclosed correspondence; and think what I must have suffered so to maintain even the right, when urged by him who can almost make the wrong appear "the better reason!" But it is past; he is silenced; and to-morrow I go.—Ah! how shall I acknowledge to my Amelia that I see with dread, with anguish, with feelings for which I can find no name, the hour so near, when I must quit, voluntarily quit, the house of Lord Westbury!—for six months my home—a home that I knew not how to value till I was to leave it! He complains, as you may observe, that I will not suffer him to fancy me under

his protection. Gracious God! what will he lose, compared with the deprivation I must endure?—Enclosed for months in a solitary apartment, my days have been divided only by Lord Westbury's going out, or his return. I slept not till sure that he was safe. I waked but to pray for his welfare. I knew the sound of his horses' feet, no less than of his own.

Oh! how fast fall your poor Cecilia's tears, when obliged to recollect that this is, perhaps, the last time when the same roof may ever shelter her and him for whom she lives—for whom alone she would live!

An alien henceforward to comfort, this various world, which in my gayer hours I have surveyed with delight and benevolence, now appears to me only a gloomy waste inhabited by beasts of prey.

What a change has my fate known since I came into this house! Careless at least, if not happy, I before wished for little, and hoped yet less:—now, name-

less anxieties, trembling hopes, boundless wishes, and overwhelming despondency, unite to tear my very soul to pieces!—Banished from my sight, with only a vague and remote hope to support his passion, how can I promise myself that Lord Westbury will not, in a very short time, lose the remembrance of your Cecilia in the arms of some woman who loves him less, though she buys him so dearly? —O conscience! sweet are thy applauses: —and sweet they ought to be, when by a pang like this we purchase them! If ever I should see those charming eyes glance with cold regard over my features, must I not expire, who scarce retain life only at the idea?—Amelia, my dear Amelia! it is past chiding, and I at present am the object only of your pity. It is now the middle of the night; and no sound echoes through the house but the dreadful cough of the porter; whom the unfeeling lady of it will kill, with making him continually thus sit up for her. This lonely scene, with such dismal thoughts as

swarm in my brain, may, perhaps, almost reduce my spirits below reason.

I have, by mere chance, in my wanderings, found a pretty and retired home, not far from Kensington, called Craven-Hill: the air is said to be fine; and I mean to allow my poor heart a little leisure to revive there, after such a blow. Your brother knows the good people well with whom I am to board.

The spring already embalms the air with its perfumes—O that in the humble retirement, which my cruel fortune compels me to choose, I may be able to renovate my exhausted soul; and moderate that passion which is not merely its prevailing principle, but, I fear, its only one!

Lady Westbury's carriage drives to the door, and when the noise of her return subsides, I will try to close my tear-swoln eyes.

Adieu! adieu!

LETTER XXXVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Craven-Hill.

IT is past!—I have torn myself from Lord Westbury! But surely I may, with a small alteration, apply the fine expression of Shakspeare—

> "For not another woe like unto this
> Succeeds in unknown time!"

I have a horrible kind of feel, as if I had endured a heavy blow—as if I had been stunned!—Now and then I start from this terrifying stupor, and am strangely tempted to run back again—only, alas! that I may incur the same danger, the same sad struggle of separation!—To counteract this impetuous wish, I turn my eyes inward; and, beholding there the idol of my first affection, I cherish, with romantic softness, that only means of supporting existence!—I call

upon my father to approve, my God to support me!—Ah! it is all I can do, with the hope that I am not forgotten by either, to act up to my duty.

Fear of incurring the observation of the servants, mingled with that of wounding the heart which was born to suffer with mine, made me think it wise to conduct the children, as usual, to breakfast in the library. I found my Lord impatiently waiting; and, as I faintly raised my tearful eyes, which I had shaded by a large bonnet, I saw obvious traces of the bitterest chagrin on that fine countenance. Both were almost wholly silent: once, indeed, he spoke; and I would have replied, but, though my lips moved, not a syllable could I utter. I saw that he was intent on some purpose, which he had hardly power to execute; but, when the servants began to remove the things, he took a note from his pocket-book, and, with an air of ceremonious politeness, addressed me—"Since I find that I am no longer to have the pleasure of seeing

Miss Rivers grace an office which nature made the first her sex can excel in, I must be allowed to present her this little mark of my gratitude." Confused, astonished, and provoked, as the presence of the servants made a refusal on my part impossible, I courtesied in silence; and thus accepted I knew not what.—Should Lord Westbury have thus presumed on my situation?

Now, indeed, came the dreaded moment; for the servants had left the room. I arose hastily to follow them, and, turning towards my Lord, saw, or fancied that I saw, displeasure on his brow. I held out my hand to him:—"Ah! let us not part in anger!" cried I in a faltering voice. "In anger, Cecilia!" returned he in a tone so soft, that my very soul melted before it; and throwing his arms around my waist, he sunk at my feet. Terror again seized on me so powerfully, in the apprehension that he might be seen thus, that even love itself gave way.—"Oh, rise! rise!" cried I, endeavouring to make him

do so, as far as my little strength would allow; "better were it to part any way than this! I am a marked wretch, a stigmatised victim, if one creature comes in! and an agony so complicated is too much for me!" Rising, he pressed me passionately to his heart; and judge how mine answered to its throbs, while his tears,—alas! the tears of Lord Westbury —flooded my cheeks! Once, and once only, my arms unconsciously clasped him; but it was so momentary an impulse, that he, perhaps, felt it not. "Adieu! adieu!" cried I. "Oh, let me go! let me leave you, while I have life to do so! This heart will never, never, my Lord, thus throb against another!—that it could, at this moment, cease to beat for ever!" The noble, generous man (for which heaven will, no doubt, reward him) in pity gave me freedom. Scarce had I reached the first flight of stairs, ere I found my senses failing; I looked fearfully round, but not a creature was near; my sight was in a manner lost, but by catching

the balustrade I saved myself from falling headlong: at length, with tottering steps, I reached the well-known room; and indulged myself in bitterly sobbing, wringing my hands, and an excess of almost irrational despair. The voices of the young ones, coming up the stairs, recalled me: Lady Louisa flew to me—"What, are you crying, too?" said the sweet, anxious child. "And papa is crying," added her more enchanting sister. I clasped them to my throbbing bosom, in speechless tenderness.—Ah! had Lord Westbury then seen me, he would have known whether I did not well remember that they were his!—I soon learnt their dear father was gone out, to hide, no doubt, from his servants, the agitation of his mind; and as my tears, I was afraid, would live in the remembrance of the sympathising young ones, I now presented to them the various toys and books which I had prepared as a parting present. Their little eager hearts were all gratitude and delight; their eyes

and tongues at once were engrossed; nor did they more attend to the sorrows of your Cecilia.

On rising, I perceived the note which my Lord had so artfully forced upon me, and found that I had drawn it out of my pocket with my handkerchief: it was of considerable value; but served only to enwrap a treasure tenfold in my estimation—a lock of (as I concluded) his own bright-brown hair. I forgave him the artifice, for the sake of that acquisition.

When I sat expecting a mortification which I knew not how to avoid—the attending Lady Westbury—I was relieved by a cold compliment, on her part, and the salary due. Great was my obligation to her, for this indulgence of her haughty spleen. I now only waited for Mr. Forrester's arrival, with whom I thought it proper to quit the house, when a note was brought me, too plainly written by a hand that trembled no less than the one that tore it open. I copy it for you.

"Cecilia, I will never wrest you from yourself. I will no more urge you against, as you say, your better reason. Go, since you are determined to go! but, oh! remember, with you will vanish every charm that has of late adorned a home which I have, till it became yours, found cheerless and solitary! Think of me for ever, I conjure you! If you deny me your person, surely I have a right to the whole of your estimable mind. Reflexion were to me valueless, had it a single object on earth but yourself!

"You have robbed me of every thing but the glorious advantages you could not deprive me of, in your own merits!

"Pardon my vanity in fancying that you once, while bathing my temples, looked intently on my hair; and think the paper which enwraps the lock I ventured to give you, as meant to procure a crystal for it, that may please you. This you have accepted, and must not return. Yet will I allow you to acquit your haughty soul; repay me with your native

gold—that rich ringlet which plays upon your neck, and often, rivalling Belinda's, has as often tempted me to rival the Baron ——.

"And can we—can we part? Not even to her sister angels would I trust the charge of my Cecilia! Oh, yet relent! yet recall me to you! Reconcile your pure mind to enjoying all the bounded felicity that fortune deigns to allow to you, or your,

"WESTBURY."

"Oh! most honoured, most amiable of men!" cried my entranced heart, "so gloriously dost thou justify my tender weakness, that I would not, even at this miserable moment, exchange it for all the dull peace which I knew ere yet we met! Thus self-banished from thy presence, with only love and virtue to support me, I look down on the richest, the most distinguished of my sex!—And is there, then, nothing in acting rightly? Let those speak who have ventured to act otherwise!"

It was not easy to reply to his interesting note; at length I did it thus.—

"In vain, my Lord, is all your artifice, when your entreaties fail. I return one of your presents; but, not less desirous to indulge you than myself, I send back only that I least value. I add to it the lock of my hair, which you have condescended to distinguish: with these accept every anxious wish and regard; for I will never, where I can acquit myself, become a debtor."

I enclosed in this the bank-note, and Mr. Forrester assures me that the letter was safely delivered;—not that I ever had reason to apprehend Lady Westbury to be suspicious, or even attentive, on points of that kind; but servants are sometimes more curious than their principals, and much more ungenerous in their construction of any thing equivocal.

I have been at this quiet little home only one day, and it already seems an

age. Not to hear, or hope that I may hear, the voice so well known, so inexpressibly dear to me: if only calling to a servant, it thrilled with the sweetest of emotions to my heart. Suddenly estranged from the scene and object, where I had both from habit and choice centered my little all of happiness, the very name of Lord Westbury is now banished from my lips: yet I repeat it every moment; nor know the sound to have escaped me. I am astonished to find that the people I am with, can suffer such an inexhaustible topic to pass unnoticed by them. I impeach even their understandings; and forgetting his name is all that they will probably ever know of Lord Westbury, I make quite a mental quarrel of it.

Mrs. Ellison tells me, that she never saw Lady Westbury so piqued as she is at my leaving her. Indeed, she has never denied me a single request or indulgence: yet if she knew all—why, perhaps, if she did, she might want generosity to value my conduct properly; and thus her igno-

rance may prove both her own security and mine.

I hope I shall soon send you word that my poor, unnerved frame has recovered its natural energy. I am very pleasantly and quietly situated, with worthy, common-kind of persons; yet I might once have made you smile with some traits I perceive in their characters already.

A letter is just delivered to me from my Lord: he is charmed with my compliment concerning that lovely lock of hair, which I would not part with for his whole estate.

Adieu!

LETTER XXXVIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

WHEN the exhausted mind seems scarce able to struggle with one grief, how is it, my dear, that a second rather

nerves than overwhelms it? Nothing on earth, I thought, could have given a spring to mine, ten days ago; and yet the moment when the news of a calamity which I might have shared, but for unforeseen circumstances, reached me, I rather flew than ran to your brother's.—Gracious God! to wake, in the dead of night, perhaps to death!—certainly to ruin! to be plundered of part of your property by the savage hands around, while the rest is consuming before your eyes! and even in this naked and desolate situation to find a claim upon your gratitude, that God allowed not the cries of your burning infants to complete the horror of the scene!—this is, indeed, a trial of fortitude! Had you been the sufferer, my Amelia, I am persuaded you would hardly have survived; but your sister-in-law is a very common character, and feels more for the loss of a chased candle-cup, and the pain of a strained thumb, than all the accumulated calamities of this tremendous fire. Mr. For-

rester, on the contrary, seemed stupified with such a sudden and total ruin, and almost ready to accuse the Almighty for not taking himself, and the whole family, when he permitted this heavy visitation. We have all been very busy in collecting the miserable fragments of clothes and furniture, preserved by the care of the neighbours, and arranging the family in lodgings in Gerrard-Street, till the same house can be rebuilt, or another obtained in as advantageous a situation. I have not been among the idle, you will readily believe.

A grave, well-looking old man called more than once, in vain, on Mr. Forrester, whose whole time has been taken up with the insurance-office. Your poor apprehensive sister persuaded herself that the stranger was some selfish, narrow-minded creditor, who meant, by urging his claim, to add to their present distress: but I was not of that opinion: indeed, I hardly could believe any such hard-hearted wretch was to be found. The day before

yesterday I was passing into the house, when our old inquiring friend had made another useless call, and I so importuned him to rest himself till Mr. Forrester returned, whom we expected every moment, that he walked into the parlour.

Mr. Forrester soon came in, and had a long *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Anonymous, as your sister calls him; he then rejoined us, with a complexion flushed with gratitude and joy.—In short, this stranger was, he said, deputed to inquire into the state of his affairs; and if five hundred pounds would assist him through the present difficulty, it would be advanced on his bond merely, for three years, during which time no interest would be accepted.

I saw in one moment the dear and generous hand thus invisibly stretched forth to rescue an innocent and industrious tradesman from poverty (alas! there are too few so inclined as to perplex one in the search, and Lord Westbury well knew your family to be among my dearest friends); and I became so inquisitive as to

our nameless benefactor, that I was obliged to hint my suspicion of his employer. In their next meeting, under the seal of secresy, Lord Westbury was declared to be the liberal lender; and, oh! how much difficulty had I to forbear pouring out my soul upon paper! yet, in one moment, I saw an indelicacy in this both to him and myself—as if he could be gratified with human acknowledgment, or I appropriated an obligation bestowed by a more general benevolence. No, I will never deprive his generous nature of the luxury of blessing, like the Almighty, in secret!

Is not this man a man indeed!—I had almost called him an angel.—How has this liberality softened and sunk into my glowing heart! It is well that I am no longer under the same roof; for virtue is never so much in danger of extinction, as when it rises to enthusiasm.

I (and I am so poor you will hardly believe it) am a loser by this fire. All my division of my father's manuscript sermons, which I valued, though the booksellers did

not, together with his picture, were devoured by the flames: the latter was the only likeness ever taken of him; and now those features, so dear, live but in my memory.

Not one word says my Lord, in those invaluable and constant epistles he sends me, of his knowledge of the fire; but he surprises me with mentioning a journey that he must indispensably take, and about which I must not even inquire. Where is it possible he can go, that I may not be told! or, rather, should I know more than he chooses, if he were less mysterious!

Mr. Forrester sits writing opposite to me, and says he shall return to you, by to-morrow's post, the bank-note you both so affectionately spared from your own occasions. Heaven will not leave the tender sympathy unrewarded!

LETTER XXXIX.

TO MISS RIVERS.

Sunning.

AFTER having been so deeply interested by my Cecilia's elegant letters, without finding one line to return her, that I could, in my own vain heart, think worth postage; brimful of matter, and burning with impatience, out I come, at last, with a new pen—aye, and a new subject, too, my dear. Prepare, Cecilia, prepare yourself for the most surprising of all possible surprises! Do you know that I have been struck with the malicious design of tantalising you, as you have often done me of late, without unveiling one atom of my subject, till I came upon it in the due order of things; but I am so very a woman that nature prevails, and I cannot, for my soul, keep my own secret.—Lord Westbury, my dear! Ah, I see the

mortal trepidation into which his very name throws you! I see your expressive eyes running insensibly over every line, till they rest on those where that loved name again occurs! Well, my Cecilia, it is in vain to deny that this Lord of yours seems determined to charm your friend, no less than yourself; and thus oblige me to excuse your partiality in his favour. Not another matronly air shall I ever venture again, for I am almost as far gone in the tender passion as yourself.

But you who describe so well, how is it that you never did justice to Lord Westbury? He so far surpasses in dignity and elegance the idea I had formed of him, that I am never weary of admiring the prodigality of nature in uniting such a mind to such a body.—No wonder half the world are ugly, when the munificent goddess, by a single stroke, thus impoverishes herself!

Well, by this time you are finely bewildered, and not a little impatient. Yes, my dear, I thought that would happen;

and so, to complete the confusion in your brain, be it known unto you, that I have this identical, engaging Lord of yours under lock and key (of the house door), and fast asleep in that favourite room, which he likes not the less from hearing us all call it Miss Rivers's chamber. So now the truth is out. Heaven help my poor pericranium! for it would make a wretched figure in the novel-writing way—when, instead of an artful and regular detail, out pops whatever is uppermost in it, without any discretion. Now you know my main incident, the story would be flat enough, did not my subject recommend itself.

Yesterday, I need not I suppose inform you (though it would be news to half your great city), was Whitsunday. I, as usual, in due time at church. Mr. Forrester had hardly begun the exhortation, when the sound of a phaeton, driving to the door, attracted every head towards it. I had not the virtue to resist mother Eve's failing. From the carriage sprang out a gentleman, not likely to set

our poor heads in their proper places; for I, in one moment, cried to myself, "Can my Cecilia's lover be half as handsome as this stranger!" Our good rustics shrunk back to make way for him; and not doubting but that he would be shown into our seat, I was ready to do the honours of it, when Sir Harry Beach, who for a miracle was at church with his new-fashioned wife and old-fashioned daughters, opened his pew, and intercepted the elegant stranger, much to my discomfiture. It is true, the compliments on both sides showed that they were not unknown to each other. To every grace of form and manners, our visitor joined a profound attention to the service; yet I thought his eye steadily reconnoitred Mr. Forrester;—so steadily, that I was not able to persuade myself he could be any other than Lord Westbury. God forgive me! but I was never less devout.

You have half taught me one of your own licensed foibles, of being a physiognomist; and, *entre nous*, I hardly know a

greater; since whatever we are disposed to discover we are sure to find; while not one trace of what we do not wish to see can be ever remarked. It is a system degrading to the Almighty; since, to form any fixed idea, we must admit the animal part of us to mould the divine. Perhaps, even then, it would be found without any standard; and, as Mr. Forrester happily said, it is an ingenious method of being wisely absurd, and benevolently unjust.

Mr. Forrester recalled my attention by a very fine discourse, which I had never heard.—You know I am partially devoted to his preaching; and never did I know him more fortunate either in subject or manner. Still my vanity lent an eye, now and then, to our stranger; whose unaffected silence, and graceful manners, were no bad example for the dozing Sir Harry, or the flippant females of his family; whose tongues and fans were more busily employed than their ears or understandings.

When Mr. Forrester quitted the pulpit, the party intercepted him; and, as I guessed, the stranger was introduced: in short, Charles continued talking with them, till I found myself almost alone; and not choosing to have any intercourse with a family who had treated me so impertinently, I even resolved to take my little one in my hand, and set out towards home without my good man. The clerk hastened to make Mr. Forrester's excuse for leaving me to dine alone. I cannot say this information delighted me; especially as I had, with difficulty, procured him some of his favourite fish for dinner. Home I went in a pet, took a solitary morsel, and resolved to be even with him by staying from church in the afternoon:—but see what it is to love one's husband!—I only vexed myself; and presently repented my plan of vexing him, by neglecting my duty. To conciliate, therefore, I ordered the tea to be set in the arbour that he has so sweetly ornamented, and which is now in high beauty.

With my boy in my arms, and Cecy in my hand, thither I adjourned, to wait for Mr. Forrester: and so we did, till quite tired.—"Mighty well, Sir!" thought I; "it is my own fault for spoiling you." Miss Cecy, too, thought proper to vex me, by slapping her little brother in a jealous fit, and soiling my favourite gown with bread and butter. I was obliged to be strict with her; but a flood of tears so mollified me, that I bade the maid lift her up to be kissed, as I could not stoop without waking the dear babe, who had fallen fast asleep at my bosom. Cecilia was engaging beyond measure; twining her little arms round my neck, and promising to be good for ever and ever: when, all on a sudden, I raised my eyes to the interesting stranger and Mr. Forrester, who were surveying me from the parlour. My first thought was to pop both the brats into the maid's arms, and vanish: my next, to keep them both, and not be disconcerted. The walk, you know, is circuitous; and I had collected myself ere

they reached the arbour. "My dear," said Mr. Forrester, "Lord Westbury honours our little habitation with a visit."—"The honour," replied I, "is doubled by the condescension."—"And the pleasure, Madam," added his Lordship with that exquisite grace by which you so justly have characterised him, "cancels both.—But I cannot consent to break in upon a scene so sweetly interesting and domestic; assure yourself that I shall take my leave, if either of these sweet children do. Surely Mrs. Forrester is not among the weak women who blush at being considered as mothers? If you knew how the character became you"—"Ah, my Lord!" interrupted I, "not even this politeness can reconcile me to the idea of being thus exposed by Mr. Forrester."—"Come, come, Madam," cried my Lord gaily, "as much a stranger as you make me, I can never consider this humility as quite natural."—"I have no pretension to that cardinal virtue, my Lord; but I confess I should t like to have my foibles exposed, ere

my good qualities have time to impress you; and some I am vain enough to ascribe to myself."—"Are you not the friend of Miss Rivers?" returned he with a marked emphasis, and, I thought, a melancholy smile; though the tone was so low that it reached not Mr. Forrester. "Happy would it be," continued he, after a pause, "if all wives considered as duly the duties of that state, which few could adorn like Mrs. Forrester."—Heavens, Cecilia! how I blush to see that I have been recording only my own praises! Had the compliments been made by any other man living, I should have dashed them through with my pen; but, as a passage thus erased would only double your curiosity, I shall even proceed, nor further rack you.

Your god-daughter, liking the turn of Lord Westbury's countenance (for children are ever, if you observe, physiognomists; which is the best excuse for indulging the propensity in mature life, since in them it can be only intuition), drew

near to him; and, with her usual soft, significant smile, tendered him a few pinks which she had gathered for that purpose. "Cecilia!" cried I, with a matronly tone and correcting frown,—"Is the dear child's name Cecilia?" inquired your Lord, with a voice so tender, and a smile so captivating, at the same moment taking her up in his arms, and fondly kissing her; perhaps only for her name;—indeed, when he spoke of you before, the poignant sweetness of his voice very much impressed me. Nature hardly discriminates features more than voices: some seem proud; some mean; some vulgar; and some all harmony and sensibility. We are either prepossessed or prejudiced the moment that most people address us; and, as the soul seems to influence the organs of utterance, when from the voice we decide on the human character, we are surely more likely to be just, than when we are governed by a mere cast of features. Lord Westbury has one of the fullest yet sweetest voices that ever reached my ear,

or rather my heart. You alone, of all the world, have been able to make my tears flow by a song in a language with which I was unacquainted; and I verily believe that my Lord might do the same, would he deign to recite, so touching is his voice!—Mr. Forrester was no less struck with it; and regrets that the church should lose one who would so well know how to give efficacy to reason, by the charm of modulation, and the graces of delivery. Actors, from whom we have no right to claim any advantage with respect to regulating our lives, undergo a strict inquiry into their qualifications before they dare hope success; but any man, whose parents, from prudence or pride, afford him an academical education, may take orders unquestioned; and thus be empowered to disgust a large body of people with the points of morality and religion most important to their lives, through the whole of his, by the imperfect or odious tone in which he continually enforces them: and there is no hissing a bad performer from the *pulpit*.

—Piety is undoubtedly the first distinction of an ecclesiastic; but eloquence is hardly less important: when these meet, and are refined by knowledge and feeling, how irresistible, how beatified almost, is their possessor!—You will not, perhaps, thank me for this sage discussion, though Lord Westbury's fine voice gave rise to it. Cecilia, however, either by her name, her sex, or her social disposition, took full possession of his Lordship's good graces, and quite eclipsed my boy.

A thunder-cloud seemed gathering over our heads, and a precipitate retreat was voted to the parlour; where the first, and perhaps only thing my Lord saw, was your odd-fashioned picture; which I should call frightful, if it had been done for any one else. "Miss Rivers, surely!" cried he, walking up to it.—"The best and most charming girl in the world!" added my good man in the warmth of his heart. Shall I tell you what Lord Westbury further said?—No: it might make you vain; while his looks, yet more

animated, would have almost turned your head. We now got upon a favourite topic with us all—the merits of your father; and Mr. Forrester gave him an eulogium worthy of both parties. The content that might be found in a bounded situation, with a polished mind and corrected character, naturally followed. On this my Charles descanted with a heart-felt delight—most flattering to the being whose fate was bound up with his. My Lord asked him if the living he held was equal to his wants and his wishes. "Entirely so, my Lord," answered Mr. Forrester, "while my wants and wishes were confined to myself; but when I cast my eyes on the circle now connected with me, and think how precarious human life is"—the tear I believe swelled into his eye, and silenced him. "You have a sweet little home here," added my Lord, after a pause; "and are, perhaps, fond of this spot."—"I have known so much happiness here, my Lord," returned Mr. Forrester, "that I ought to be so."—"If

you have not a most decided partiality for it," said my Lord, "I mean to transfer you to another; where a living of thrice the value of this has just fallen into my gift, and is at your service."—"May I think your Lordship in earnest?" cried my Charles, with a faltering impatience. "Never more so, Sir, believe me," returned my Lord: "nor can I enough congratulate myself on being able thus at once to render to a worthy man, and a respectable parish, a mutual benefit."—Oh! that I could enclose in my frank, my dear, the manner of this compliment, with the matter!—Mr. Forrester sprung up with speechless intelligence, and, after a moment, cried, "Pardon me, my Lord! if I express not properly my gratitude for such unmerited generosity:—when I have thanked my God, I may be better able to thank my benefactor!"—I was never more tempted to break through the ceremonies of life, and follow my husband, than on this occasion: that, however, being impossible, I soon found my sex's

privilege, and made due acknowledgements; at least as far as words could convey them. It is true, I well knew the secret spring of his Lordship's beneficence, which Mr. Forrester does not. Though properly grateful for your mention of him in the first instance, the dear man half persuades himself that it was his sermon which obtained him the preferment. Remember, I forbid your smiling at this, on pain of my returning the compliment the very first opportunity.

The phaeton now came to the door, and I found my Lord meant to sleep at Salisbury. The weather was very unpromising, and the evening so far advanced, that, knowing he would not find any good accommodations near, I ventured to entreat him to lodge with us, and send his servants into the village. He frankly accepted the invitation; and I joyfully withdrew, to direct your room to be prepared for him. I very easily made out a little rural repast, of which he partook

with as much pleasure as if we had ransacked London for dainties. Peculiarly formed to adorn that social system to which he seems truly attached, how does his heart enliven his understanding, and his gaiety give poignancy to both!—Ah, my dear! no wonder that you could not resist Lord Westbury!—*Happily*, as Marmontel has it, I love my husband;—*happily* that dear husband sat close by him, and made no bad figure on the comparison; and *happily*, above all, this irresistible man is not in love with me!—Can there live a woman indifferent to such a husband?—Assure yourself that she will never live long; since she must be already in her second childhood.

How kind it is of my Lord to lie so late! or I could never have scribbled you this history: but I sent off the brats into the fields two hours ago, lest they should wake him, and took to my pen, as you see. Mr. Forrester tells me they now wait breakfast. Adieu, then, my Cecilia!

to you my heart directs its gratitude, and tenderly thanks you for thus rejoicing

Your own

AMELIA FORRESTER.

LETTER XL.

TO MISS RIVERS.

AH, my dear Cecilia! I was born a blunderer, and shall die one. How have I, by a childish impatience to give you history for history, at once defeated a measure no less generous than disinterested! nay, to crown my absurdity, I have been compelled to set myself down, as honest Dogberry has it, "an ass," both in my Lord's opinion and my own, by avowing my over-hasty communication. However, there is no recalling the past; and all we have now in our power is to make the best of it.

After breakfast, my Lord proposed to

Mr. Forrester to ride over with him to Arlington; within two miles of which our new home lies: and then they might together examine into the state of the parsonage; which my Lord spoke of as having been unnecessarily enlarged by his father, for the accommodation of himself and brothers, while with Dr. Leslie: that worthy man's successor, who was a bachelor, inhabited, my Lord said, only the new apartments; of course, the body of the house was in bad condition. A tender glance which my Charles cast towards me was not lost upon his patron; who added, that if I was not afraid of his driving, and would trust myself in the phaeton, Mr. Forrester might, perhaps, keep us company on horseback. I owned myself to be charmed with the proposal; and we soon drove off, with the whole village in full gaze at us. A groom rode on, and bespoke dinner at an inn; and the evening set us down at a house where my Lord politely said it was his turn to play the host. His private road was cut for

mikes through plantations, which environ this terrestrial paradise:—surely, had Adam and Eve found their way hither, they would hardly have regretted that from which they were driven!

The grand style of architecture gives the mansion an air of antiquity, which the furniture entirely removes. I am in love with my own apartment, it is so exquisitely modern!—You know Mr. Forrester rallies me for loving nothing old but wine. The evening proved too wet for a ramble through the gardens and those enchanting woods which I had cast a longing eye on as we rode; of course I wandered over the house: nor did I forget the little saloon adjoining the conservatory; where I amused myself with a few tears, at remembering how my Cecilia would have enjoyed being with me. The drawings are various, bold, and charming; but there is a gallery above, hung with such exquisite pictures that I could wear out my eyes with surveying them, did not nature assert, at intervals,

her empire,—for the views from the high-arched windows attract the sight every other moment.

Mr. Forrester was so tired with his long ride that I rose without waking him, and resolved to ramble through the gardens alone. I soon struck into some wild walks, ending in a close wilderness; at the extremity of which I found a hermit's cell: it was so simply fitted up, and romantically gloomy, that I looked about for the venerable owner, and began to repeat Goldsmith's beautiful ballad: not but at intervals those dear delights of one's childhood, the Arabian Nights, &c. would occur; more especially as I suddenly cast my eyes on a door, cut, as it seemed, through the rock, but so nicely adapted and painted, that only a woman I think could have discovered it. However, I was not so afraid of the evil Genii, but I resolved to find out whither this led; even though I should encounter within a basin of gold, as big as the dome of St. Paul's, with the body of some

prince, or his spouse, enchanted there ever, since the days of Solomon. After several noisy and ineffectual efforts on my part the door suddenly gave way, and I popped upon—mercy on us! neither living hermit nor dead princess, but a much more agreeable object, in the person of Lord Westbury, who, hearing me, had opened it. He took my hand, and led me into a lofty building, with a dome, fitted up as his library; though, in my mind, it is much more like a mausoleum; especially as the niches between the books are filled with statues, &c. The ground, either by art or nature, sinks so low around the building that no human eye can reach a window from without. We look through the distant wood, over a bold sheet of water, towards the back-front of the house; and this view is happily reflected in an opposite large convex mirror. The door this way is rather for show than use; and the customary entrance is through the hermit's cell. The whole building, my Lord says, is imperceptible from

without; except when the smoke of the fires guides the eye to it. For my own part, a library so magnificent and solemn would shock and depress my spirits; but the minds of men have, I suppose, a firmness which ours do not possess; and require wholly to shut out the world, when, in the language of the poet, they would

"——— take a flight at heaven."

My Lord did me the honour to tell me, that I should always have free access to this sublime solitude when I came to my new home; and, locking the door, showed me where I might find the key, unless some one was already in possession of it. But when I saw him put it under a scull, I thanked him a thousand times for the offered favour; assuring him, that I could not lay a finger on the scull if a much greater pleasure depended on that effort. Recollecting that this snug *tête-à-tête* of ours might not have the happiest appearance, I hastened back to the house to call Mr. Forrester. While he was

dressing, I gave him a circumstantial detail of my ramble, with the miraculous adventure of the Hermit of the Rocks. He, dear soul! set this all down for one of my fine dreams; and chid me very gravely for thus treasuring up my nocturnal rêveries.

Before dinner we drove to the parsonage. Ah, that odious close lane!—the large iron gates!—Every thing I saw impressed upon my mind the story you so sweetly told. The parsonage was not so much out of repair as I expected; nor wholly unfurnished, though it had only accommodations for a bachelor. Notwithstanding it is a much handsomer and larger house than that we inhabit, it is neither in itself nor its situation so desirable. My Lord means to fell the timber that forms a coppice between one side of the house and Arlington; and thus open to our windows a fine view of his park. In one of the parlours, I saw still hanging the pictures of Dr. Leslie, his lady, and daughter; as well as those of

the two young Cliffords. I knew the brothers by my Lord's. How strongly is virtue expressed in the venerable countenance of the doctor! and yet how divinely is it softened by benevolence! One can see where the Hebe next to him gained her beauty; and her lover that touching softness of manners, which is of all his advantages the most interesting. Miss Leslie is, indeed, a finished and an irresistible creature! "She breathes of youth," as Dryden says of Venus; and has an air of innocence which I have seldom seen equalled. Yet her charms are not of a cast to receive a grace from a coronet: and I rather think that they must be embellished by the shade of her straw hat. That she should be the beauty of a village, does not surprise me; but to become that of a court, does. So delicate a countenance, I should think, would be overlooked amid the high-complexioned belles that abound there. I forgot, indeed, that she may have borrowed their cosmetic improvements; and then easily may she

outshine the circle. Lord Westbury is pourtrayed as a youth, with his graceful locks curling over his face: yet altered as he is by mature life and fashion, I think I should anywhere have known this picture. His countenance is now formed by its expression; and though his complexion is less fair, it is more animated. In short, time has changed the graces of Lord Westbury, without robbing him of one; nor do I know whether I would rather have him as he was, or as he is.

This collection of portraits it is certain came not from the pencil of Apelles; yet I doubt whether he ever contemplated his most finished production with more pleasure than I felt on thus surveying the rustic performance of a mere dauber, since it had been his good fortune to perpetuate the features of my benefactor.

I understood from my Lord that these portraits were not comprehended in the scattered property of the late incumbent, but left there by himself as too contemptible to find a place at Arlington. I whis-

pered a faint wish, that he would add this gift to the favour already conferred on us; and rallying me on my taste in painting, with indirect but elegant apologies for the paltry present, Lord Westbury entreated me from that moment to consider them as my own. Judge, whether I did not feel both proud and rich in this acquisition! I surveyed them in so many lights, that, as in the case with regard to our own dear little brats, I soon found the beauties grow strangely on me; while all the faults, in a manner quite as surprising, vanished.

The garden has been a fine one, and is thrice as large as ours at Sunning; but at this present writing it is a mere wilderness, as Dr. White spent a very small part of the year here, from his partiality to another county where he likewise held a living. In wandering over the walks, we came abruptly on that odious alcove where Lord Westbury made his marriage contract. I felt quite discomposed at the sight of it; nor did it appear to inspire

him with any very pleasant recollections, for he fell into a rêverie which left a long thoughtfulness on him. He however drove off alone in his phaeton; and Mr. Forrester was good enough to return in the chariot with me to Arlington.

We cannot have every thing we wish. I had rather reside still at Sunning, could Mr. Forrester reconcile that with his duty; but he, you know, considers the parish under his care as only a larger family, with almost the same claims as his more immediate one: "and if," says he often, "I could not reconcile myself to leaving my children to their own guidance, how shall I answer deserting the many not half so well informed, perhaps, though much older?" Were he of a different opinion, I can easily observe that of my Lord is decisively against pluralities. He spoke with contempt of Dr. White, as grasping at whatever he could get. In the home I am now to quit, I have enjoyed that mild and serene felicity which we are always in danger of impairing, but can

hardly ever hope to increase. I therefore survey it as one does the dear and familiar features of an old friend.

Lord Westbury had, I suppose, previously directed the postillions to drive through the park and woodlands, which afforded me beautiful and rich scenery. In the evening I again betook myself to the gardens, nor was I long there before my Lord and Mr. Forrester joined me. I led the way to the dome library, and enchanted my husband no less with the romantic entrance than the magnificent building: not to mention the statues, busts, and bronzes, which, he says, will prove an inexhaustible source of amusement to him when settled at the parsonage. In truth, I thought he meant at once to establish himself as the anchorite, for there was no getting him away. Finding that I urged him in vain, my Lord said, in a rallying voice, "Dare you trust yourself alone with me, Mrs. Forrester?"

I replied in the same tone, as I gave him my hand, "He knew so well

how to deserve and obtain confidence, that the woman who feared him must certainly be one who loved him too well."

We were now out of the hermit's cell, and Mr. Forrester still in the library, examining a telescope mounted on a new construction. Lord Westbury turned towards me abruptly, and, fixing his intelligent eyes on mine with a peculiar expression—

"Do you know, madam," cried he, "though you are a woman, and something given to sooth the self-love of those who please you, I have formed an idea that one might get the truth from you on a very, very particular occasion."

"That must be a very, very particular occasion, my Lord, which renders my speaking it a doubt."

This ready answer perplexed him:—he hesitated. His manly cheek flushed; for I must not, I think, say blushed. After a pause, he added, "Then tell me frankly!—tell me truly, my dear madam,

whether you saw in me a stranger when first we met?"

"As a test of my sincerity, I answer, that I have been, my Lord, from childhood, the bosom friend of Miss Rivers: nor do I think, from the hour our hearts blended, that she has known a thought she did not wish to repose with mine."

"Ah! worthy to share with me the confidence of my Cecilia!" cried he, kissing my hand: "What perplexity—what embarrassment does a frankness like her own save me from! You are already, then, apprised of the ardour—of the purity of our attachment? You already know, that there is but one such created being as my adored Cecilia? No: there is nothing like her, Mrs. Forrester! There never will be any thing like her!" sighed he; while his fine eyes swam in tears of admiration and rapture. "You, too, must see the delicacy both of her frame and her mind. Each, alike, disqualifies her for the arduous employment which she holds it her duty to pursue. Neither can you be a

stranger to the pride and obstinacy (for, however just the motive, or amiable the manner, I can call her refusal of that competence which would make her life easy, without taking any thing from mine, by no other name,) with which she withdraws from my protection; shuns even my sight; rejects my offers; and, in fine, separates her fate, though she cannot her soul, wholly from his who adores her. Can I possibly reconcile my feelings to this severe ordination? You, my dear madam, are not a suspected person, and may have more influence. Indulge me, by winning her to share your home; but conceal with the greatest caution, that the request comes from me; for that were to ensure a refusal. You will be happy, superlatively happy, in the society of this sweet creature; and I shall be less wretched, when I know her secure from danger or insult."

"Ah, my Lord!" cried I unwarily, "have you the heart to censure Cecilia for so generous a pride? Did you know—"

"Did I know what? dearest Mrs. Forrester!" returned he, alive in a moment to the tenderest impulses.

I recollected myself, however, and with gravity replied: "How oppressed my Cecilia is by your inexhaustible generosity, still more, my Lord, would you admire, nay pity her! Ah! charming as you think her, Cecilia Rivers is yet unknown to Lord Westbury;—nor is there on earth, indeed, one human being like her. I should naturally have made the use your Lordship wishes of my improved fortune; nor, bounded as our income has hitherto been, is it my fault, or Mr. Forrester's, that she shared it not with us: but you need not be told that the frame of my Cecilia is not more delicate than her mind; no influence can warp her from the plain path of rectitude."

"It is an effort that I dare not make; but, in this instance, rectitude is on your side. Remember, I depend on your influence; but would be unnamed. Mind—"

Mr. Forrester was now close behind

us, and thus the subject dropped. Early in the morning my Lord sent me home in his travelling chariot, carrying Mr. Forrester to town in his phaeton, to go through the usual form of presentation. Charles will, perhaps, be with you as soon as this letter. Had I dared intrust him with my commission, I might have spared myself the trouble of writing it: but whatever your opinion may be of the fidelity of a married woman, I have hitherto reconciled the duties of a friend and a wife, by never having one secret of my own, nor ever being led to betray one intrusted to me. Mr. Forrester has a soul so upright, that he would despise himself for exacting, or me for yielding, such a confidence; and you know on the article of letters, as well as some other particulars, we observe a respect for each other not very common.

And now, my Cecilia, I have only to enforce Lord Westbury's honourable, rational request! What can you have to fear from a heart so noble, while living

under a roof sanctioned as ours will be? The period of your life and mine is not very distant, when we bounded our views to passing our days together; and though both may have since discovered that we might increase our happiness by extending our plan, yet to carry this point is something gained. I have mustered and answered, in my own mind, all the objections I think it possible for you to dwell upon, without finding one that will justify you in refusing to reside here. If I formerly overwhelmed you with admonitions, remember, that it was under circumstances too trying ever to occur again. And does not my affectionate heart, think you, languish to sooth the oppression of my Cecilia's? Ah! hasten hither, my dearest! pour forth all your bitter regrets, your stifled emotions, on my bosom. Hope humbly, nor doubt of obtaining, while you deserve it, the happiest fate. A conduct so unexampled must, I think, finally ensure it.

I too plainly perceive, that, by the chit-

tish impatience of my last, I half defeated Lord Westbury's generous purpose. How shall I make him amends, if you oblige me wholly to do so?- Yet well my Cecilia knows, that worlds could not win me to propose any mode of conduct to her, which my own heart told me was wrong. It is not possible that she should suspect of this Her own

AMELIA FORRESTER.

LETTER XLI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Craven-Hill.

AMELIA! my too kind Amelia! ah, why did you thus descant on Lord Westbury's generous conduct? why even repeat, to a heart touched like mine, the only name that gives it emotion? Did you mean to make me wholly dissolve away in tears? Ah, no: you vainly believed me capable of enjoying your joy.

But you have surely forgotten what it was fearfully to love, or well would you have known, that I must grudge to every human being the right of praising him whom I adore, yet hate the individual who does not; for this inconsistency is, I doubt, among the universal extravagancies of that irresistible passion.

Alas! with what distracting tumults, both of pain and pleasure, did your letters fill my bosom! And did Lord Westbury, then, pronounce my name with such peculiar softness? And those charming eyes—did they indeed sparkle with increased brilliance, at recalling mine even in idea? I would gladly have spent my last breath in the sigh that followed that mere hope. Ah, Amelia! he sought, he chose, you to enjoy his confidence; to share his walks; to muse over those sad, those interesting scenes! Could you imagine that I should not envy you the intercourse which I was, perhaps, the first means of your obtaining?

That your wishes second those of Lord

Westbury, would surely be an argument with me for accepting the seducing proposal contained in your last, did not prudence, and not pride, interpose. Alas, my dear! the less I fear Lord Westbury, the more ought I to fear myself: and your Cecilia will be vain enough to add, that, had he been a common lover, she could not have been reduced to this agonising struggle with a too tender heart. The vices of Lord Westbury would never have endangered me; but from his virtues—oh, from them let me fly while I can! Abandoned must be the woman who sins upon reflexion. But in self-confidence there is a danger—I dare not, Amelia, I will not, trust it.

How should I, who cannot read, hear, or pronounce the name of Lord Westbury without a throb of tenderness, wander with the friend of my youth through all the scenes where his matured, without finding that soft feeling augmented? Is there one spot, for miles, around that home you are now ready to take pos-

session of, where I might not find, or fancy, a charm the most touching? Time itself, by lulling my fears, would surely increase my danger. Lord Westbury, at intervals, inhabits Arlington: you could not shut your doors on your friend, your benefactor....And to allow his visits! Oh, Amelia, for your own sake, for mine, think no more of this project! A single trial is sufficient for a heart subdued like that he reigns in. Nor dare I hope to contend again with success; a second temptation it is my duty forever to shun.

The situation I am condemned to choose is dull, obscure, unpleasant; but it is busy, it is safe. I am thrown upon myself, and my mind has, both in its religion and its activity, a variety of resources which I feel it my duty to improve. I spend almost my whole time in drawing, it is true; and try only at likenesses: alas! my dear, even your rustic painter, I fancy, outdoes me! "Ah! seek to know," that sweet air of Bach's, alone employs my voice; yet, certainly, the

cares of a dependent situation insensibly fill my thoughts, and in a degree detach them from their dearest object—that object who would, were I in easier circumstances, wholly engross them. Yet, do not suppose that I mean to remain in this retirement longer than is absolutely necessary. I must labour for my living, that I may endure to live at all. Can you know my nature, and imagine that to think myself the object of Lord Westbury's solicitude—my honour more dear to him than his own—my comfort the source of his;—ah, Amelia, what must this weak heart be made of, if it melted not at being told all this! Never, never tempt me so cruelly again, I implore you.

And now, my darling friend, allow me to change the subject, and congratulate you on your opening prospects. I was always sure that the merit of Mr. Forrester would obtain him patronage; and if I have even remotely been the means, how gratifying is that consciousness! May you,

and your amiable husband, live to share many, many peaceful years; and behold a dear and numerous offspring, good and lovely as yourselves, maturing around you! Then, with guiltless minds and undivided hearts, may you together sink into that grave over which will fall many tears, besides those dropt by filial piety! Alas! I may well say so, when mine flew at the idea. Yet, that is no longer a distinction; they now fall profusely, almost without any reason.

* * * * * * *

I was interrupted in my epistle by the arrival of your Charles. I flew into his arms, as I would to those of a brother, and gave him the embrace I meant for my Amelia. He looks uncommonly well; and was all sympathy, although he knew not what occasioned the alteration he regretted to see in me: yet sweetly did he sooth and flatter my heart, by the grateful eulogium he made on my Lord. He has an apartment in his house, and passes almost the whole of his time in a spot so

dear to me. The forms of induction are completed, and Mr. Forrester longs, he says, again to be at home. He longs to leave Lord Westbury! Oh, heavens!—could you be cruel enough to desire him to drag me back to Sunning? He insists that I shall return with him, and finds a strange change in my looks. That does not much surprise me, for I knew myself to be grown very thin. I did not know, though, that I was so frightfully pale. However, I shall comply with one of his requests, and have medical advice. When he had won upon me to own that I was ill, he assumed your own soft insinuating air. Not that I am very ill, my dear: it would be strange if I were not thin, when so little food and sleep sustain me. My spirits, too, are surely unaccountably subdued; for, while Mr. Forrester affectionately condoled with me, I was very near bursting into tears, and had much difficulty to twinkle away the officious drops.

Do not think me quite an invalid, however, for I dine to-day with the Forresters;

and as I have more than a mile to walk before I can get a coach, and have some change to make in my dress, pardon this abrupt conclusion from

Yours ever,

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER XLII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Craven-Hill.

MUST I never hope for one moment of peace? Why will this cruel, this adored lover haunt me thus in vain? Condemned to loneliness, even when I walk I cannot find a companion, therefore never venture beyond the adjoining fields. There, sheltered in a hawthorn bush, I lately discovered a nest of young birds, and often amuse myself with watching them while the parent is away. I was just now divided between this, and the majestic spectacle of the setting sun (for you know I am

very indulgent to the idolatry of the Persians), when the sudden approach of a man startled me. I am not unapprised how imprudent it is to be alone so near London, and attempted to run homeward; when a well-known voice called eagerly to me to stop. Offended at Lord Westbury's hiding himself; offended at his thus addressing me; and convinced that I must be resolute or undone, I answered with some asperity—

"Is there, then, no place in which I can be my own mistress, my Lord? How strange is this liberty!"

"Hear me once—once only, my dearest—"

"You cannot have any thing new to say to me, and we are within reach of observation. I insist on going:" resentfully struggling, I added, "How dare you treat me thus?"

"You are very absolute, madam," returned he coldly. "Go, if you will go;" casting my hands at once from his:

"yet before this hour to-morrow you may repent your unnecessary severity."

Lord Westbury was close to the gate, over which he vaulted with incredible celerity, and was out of sight in a moment. I remained root-bound, as it were, without power even to call after him. Recollection convinced me that he was anxious and disordered; while his eyes at once sad, wild, and tender.....Oh, my God! what possessed me to drive him thus away? His voice, too, had a broken poignant tone, which coming from his heart pierced mine. Alas, I was born only to err and repent!—Now would I give the world that I had heard him.—Surely I was infatuated! He came with a generous distinction to confide to me some agitating occurrence; and I, I who adored him, savagely obliged him to confine the care to his own bosom!

I returned home more dead than alive. Oh, Lord Westbury, I repent to-night of my selfish repulse! Did he deserve this

from a creature whom he had loaded with favours; and oh! much more, distinguished by a love that might flatter the vainest of her sex?

What a poor capricious selfish animal do I grow! I wonder how you endure me, Amelia. Never did I calculate, till now, the strength of your affection.

Alas, my Lord! did you know what I suffer already for my fault, you could not but forget it; since to live under your displeasure would be impossible. Of all the wretched nights I have spent since love first broke my rest, this will be the worst. A thousand vague horrors, which I cannot shape into any distinct form, rack my mind. He must have left his dinner party early: his complexion was heated:—perhaps a quarrel!—Ah, can his life be in danger? Then are all my earthly prospects closed indeed. Yet less could hardly have caused the mysterious agitation; the unusual impatience; the thrilling adieu—which only seemed to want the forever that to-morrow may add to it!

Mr. Forrester, ere this, is at your side. His affectionate hand dries the tears which your poor miserable friend, perhaps, draws from your eyes. His stronger mind supports your weak one. Happy, happy Amelia! who understand so well how to unite the mistress with the wife, that your husband knows not a wish of which you are not the cause or the object.

* * * * * * *

Wednesday morn.

What a night has this been! If I closed my eyes a moment, it was only to see him pale, insensible, expiring!—continually repeating that killing adieu! I wandered sometimes through churchyards; and once I thought that I plunged into a new-made grave on a dead body. In what a terror did I wake! At length the day broke, and I endeavoured to dispel the vapours of a disturbed imagination: but in vain. This world hung heavy on my heart, even while its aspirations sought another; and the tears that mingled with my prayers fell wholly for Lord Westbury.

If I receive not his letter to the very moment, I shall lose my senses. I know I must be tedious, be insupportable, to you, my Amelia! but pray bear with me. God and yourself alone know the griefs that embitter my hours; and no bosom must receive a sigh of mine, save yours.

* * * * * * *

Heaven has completed my miserable destiny, and my tears will now flow for ever. The killing letter which I enclose, was part of a packet delivered with a caution that announced its contents. I spoke not one word, but sank at the feet of Mr. Trevilian in a happy, but transient, oblivion.

" TO MISS RIVERS.

" CECILIA, beloved Cecilia! of what have you not deprived me? But in moments like these, should little errors live in the memory? Take thus, then, the love, the prayers, the blessing, the last adieu, which your strict decorum yesterday robbed us both of! Yet the severity I arraigned

was, perhaps, mercy; for, had my heart opened itself to you, I might have wanted resolution to act as I have done. Yes, the world, while you remained in it, had charms enough still to make life desirable.

"Mr. Trevilian (his name alone will tell you how to value him) has undertaken to see the event of the morning, and convey this to your hands. In him you will dare to confide; and he is justly impressed with your merit. I bear into eternity one pleasing remembrance, in thinking that you will find in him the protector you would not suffer me to become.

"Lest even a breath might sully your name, it is wholly omitted in my will.—Impressed indelibly on my heart, with that be it buried! Accept as a legacy, the independence you refused as a gift. I have limited myself, knowing well the noble pride which ever charmed me. I have added, too, the treasure of your letters;—precious, inestimable, pledges of my happiness —ever lovely portraits of

the most lovely of human minds! I have nothing to bequeath half so dear.

"To expatiate further would be only to wound more sensibly your heart and my own. Take comfort, my soul's beloved! my chosen Cecilia!—I might have lived to have become ungrateful, ungenerous, unworthy!—Yet, such a miser am I of your tenderness, that I wish to retain even when I shall have lost the power of enjoying it; and can never, never know a pang more keen than I now endure when I say, by anticipation, Eternally adieu!"

All the pangs of death are little, sure, to those I felt on reading this—to those I still feel.—Oh! burst at once, thou overswelling heart, and give me ease!—That noble one, from whence thy better life was drawn, is cold, exhausted!—Its dearest blood congeals on the sword of a murderer!

Yet is he not absolutely dead; at least so would Mr. Trevilian persuade me: the delivery of the packet, however,

shows too plainly his own decided opinion. Perhaps he thinks to soften the stroke by prolonging the disclosure. I have driven him hence to seek the truth ——to bring it to me instantly.—Reserve, decorum, the cold constraints of sex and custom, are extinct at once in a moment like this:—they shiver like veils of gauze before a tempest.

Oh, Westbury! sole name that makes language enchanting!—must the fond repetition of it, till now an inexhaustible source of pleasure to me, henceforth become an inexhaustible misery? — Can Heaven permit a monster to deprive genius of its noblest patron; merit of its warmest friend; me of my only comfort?

How soon is a friendship formed between two hearts agitated with the same affliction! The sympathy of Mr. Trevilian, the tears he mingled with mine, although they aggravated the suffering, impressed me at once with a deep sense of his merit, and saved us both the toil of common forms.

* * * * *

That Lord Westbury yet exists I thank Almighty God!—at least so Trevilian solemnly declares. But, alas! he is not able to deny that the situation of the sufferer leaves little room for hope.—O Thou, who readest the distraction of this heart, receive that as my pleading! Leave me, oh! leave me yet one hope, one wish on earth; nor urge me to precipitate a fate but just supportable before!

* * * * *

An express every hour would not be enough for me. I seem as if each moment would be the last of my hopes. I walk impatiently to meet the messenger; though sure not to do so till I am sinking with fatigue, and hardly have I then power to crawl back again. He is not worse, they say, to-day. Not *worse!*—Oh! how cold is that comfort!

The quarrel happened after dinner in a large company; where Colonel Vaughan became rude, and both at length personal and exasperated. Concessions would have been, Mr. Trevilian says, degrading.

But can the heart, can the reason, be duped by such sophistry?—The rule of right is irrefragable; and its dictates must be always consistent with honour. It is prejudice, inveterate prejudice, that governs us in defiance of our better knowledge. Colonel Vaughan sent the challenge. My Lord had just received it when I drove him away by a prejudice perhaps as erroneous as that which made him accept the bloody invitation. They met yesterday morning in Hyde Park (alas, so near me too!) I know not the manner of the murder; for such shall I ever term the event of the meeting. Lord Westbury too surely fell!—The absurd offence was expiated by the noblest blood that ever saturated the detestable spot!—The villain was permitted, I am told, to withdraw!—Why, why, was I not there? My hands, weak and trembling as they are, would have been able to hold him. While I write this, I loath, I abhor the world and all its ways.—A highwayman, who, in the moment of danger and trepidation, shoots a fellow-creature to save himself,

becomes the marked object of pursuit; and suffers, if taken, a premature and ignominious death: while a gay man of the world, who, for a petty offence (committed, perhaps, in the absence of reason), presents a pistol to the bosom of him who was only one hour before his dearest friend; establishes a reputation on the outrage; and is secure from punishment, even should the law claim its victim!—Oh! what ceremonious savages, what deliberate assassins, are these men of fashion!—And wert thou, my Edward! (for such, on thy death-bed, I may fondly call thee) wert thou reserved for such a fate, in the glory of thy youth, and perfection of thy beauty?

His gift, too!—most afflicting bounty!—"I might have lived to become ungrateful, ungenerous, unworthy!"—Could he believe that expressions like these would console one who feels it to be an impossibility for time or circumstances to effect this change?—Alas!

"When thus the hand that wounded would restore,
The gen'rous bosom only bleeds the more!"

Oh! did I part with thee, beloved of my heart! for the last time in anger?—I have hitherto acquiesced in the slavery of form, the outward and visible signs of virtue: but now, methinks, I could venture all, virtue herself excepted, to mitigate his sufferings!—That sad consolation is given to an indifferent, while I wring my hands and heart in solitary despair!—Now, indeed, Lady Westbury, do I envy you!—While I saw him gay, in youth, in health, in splendour, I was enabled to resign determinately to you the darling object of my life; but my bleeding heart in this hour of horror asserts its claim, and would engross him wholly.—Alas! perhaps his wife gives up the watchful offices of love to sordid, careless nurses; smooths not with trembling fingers the pillow; supports not with unwearied arm his languid head; nor, weeping on his feeble hand, extorts his safety from a merciful God!—All this—but why do I speak of this as a merit?—is it not the luxury of affliction?

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER XLIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

A WEEK, a whole week, has Lord Westbury lingered in this miserable fluctuating state! What a week has it been to me!—I am grown old in the interval, and feel half of my life spent in waste of constitution. The people I board with must think me distracted, as well as an alien from my family. They are told that it is a brother for whom I weep: and why, when so near him, should I not watch his couch? But of what moment are their suppositions to me?—Lord Westbury is in danger, and I can no longer attend to any thing but himself.—The influence of habit is continually denied by reasoners; yet what else, in these hours of anguish, keeps me from falling at the feet of Lady Westbury, and imploring her to give up an office to which she is unequal, and I die

to obtain?—And yet I dare not do this; a secret power at once seems to impel and forbid me.

What days of misery are mine! I sometimes make an effort over my feelings, and, with disordered dress, and eyes blood-shot with weeping, sit down to dinner. Scarce, perhaps, have I tasted food, when recollection overcomes me: deluged with tears, I rush from the table, and shut myself up in my own room. My nights are, if possible, more dismal. I walk the chamber for hours, perusing, at intervals, the last dear memorials of his affection, and drenching them in tears; or, gazing on all I have left of him, that picture so worshipped! I address to it a thousand vain romantic complaints; till worn out, yet restless, I throw myself on the bed, and try to forget, for a few hours, the sorrows that devour me.

Mr. Forrester has urged me to pass this day at his house. I will there finish my melancholy scrawl. Some topic may occur to vary from this only one, which

here fills up my whole soul, and directs my pen.

I wandered through Park-Lane, though without other hope or view than to survey the walls which sheltered a sufferer so dear, and lament, at leisure, that singular destiny which excluded me from them; when Mrs. Ellison, from one of the windows, perceived, and, eagerly beckoning me, left it not in my power to retreat. The footmen, who were collected in the hall, had an air melancholy enough to impress even an indifferent person; and Mrs. Ellison burst forth in all the licensed grief of the vulgar: while I—suffered in silence. Guess what I felt to find myself once more under the same roof with Lord Westbury! His servants were preparing for the arrival of the surgeons, who came; and Mrs. Ellison was summoned to wait in the ante-room; leaving me in an agony that of the patient could hardly exceed. I opened the parlour door every moment, and by that means got a glance of the

young ladies; who flew, dear children! to my arms, with a flattering eagerness. I would have rejoiced in their sight; I would have delighted in them: but my soul was in their father's chamber, and nothing left of me but tears.—Yet did I mentally recommend the little unfortunates to God, and entreat him to compassionate their unconscious innocence.

When Mrs. Ellison returned, I wanted resolution even to inquire the event; but she saved me the effort, by informing me that the surgeons had, after a tremendous operation, extracted the ball; leaving the patient more dead than alive. Lady Westbury had passed the whole day, it seems, at home. Alas! to be merely there is thought a great mark of affection; as if tenderness dictated no more than decorum demands. With what fortitude does he suffer!—Oh! that my participation, my love, would lessen one of thy pangs, how gladly would I then compound for that of death itself!—Yet do they say his constitution will resist all

these attacks; that his fever lessens, and his wound promises to heal.

Alas! should he recover, what must I do with a gift so nobly bestowed, so delicately veiled from observation? Must I, with my usual severe inflexibility, return it? Can I add another wound to that which my heart hourly washes in its fondest tears? Oh, let that terrible wound heal first! I speak not from a thought of appropriating the gift: money is ever the object of my contempt, unless for the common purposes of life. May I have the relief of restoring these notes into his own hand! His whole estate would not to me be half so great a pleasure. Can title or fortune add a grace to the man of one's heart? I could almost wish that Lord Westbury could be deprived of such adventitious distinctions, for thus alone can he know himself to be the only object of my tenderest affections. I have filled my paper, or my hand would not yet finish on a subject so dear. Mr. William Forrester anxiously watches over the health of Lord

Westbury: I would not wrong his humanity, but he has powerful reasons for keeping it alive.

My Lord is easier, they say, this evening; and a thousandweight of lead is taken from my heart. This is the first free breath I have drawn since the news of his danger reached me. If thus I suffer now, what would have been my fate had I caused the calamity?

LETTER XLIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

YOU, my Amelia! whose generous nature has taken so warm an interest in the cares of your friend, and the welfare of your patron, ought to be the first to share in happier prospects. Lord Westbury lives! He has informed me that he may hope to do so, though only in a single line. If joy could kill, hardly had I survived the sight of a hand so dear. Long, long may

an existence so valuable be continued! I am unable to fix my attention to any single object. I sing, laugh, weep, fly into the garden, wonder to find myself there; begin writing again, blot my paper, spoil my pen, and throw it at last aside, because unable to reduce my agitated spirits to calmness. "Great wits," as the poet says, "are most allied to madness." I own, that I should think great sensibility a nearer relation. I have often, I believe, had my rationality doubted within these four-and-twenty hours.

I had the mortification a few days since to find that Mr. Trevilian had chosen the only hour of my absence from hence, to pay me a visit. How vexed was I that I had not the gift of divination! for I was certain he brought me some news. From that moment, here have I been stationary: yet day after day has elapsed in undecisive messages. This happy morning, however, he obligingly came again, and brought me, as he truly said, a happier introduction than his first: it was a line

from Lord Westbury himself. I kissed it in a transport, and steeped the lines so invaluable in the tears of my heart. I was quite embarrassed when I suddenly recollected the impropriety of this conduct: but it is so little a while since I condescended to adopt the manners of the world, that I am far from being an adept in them. Mr. Trevilian has, however, a warm and generous nature; he therefore relieved me from the awkwardness of my situation, by turning the conversation on Lord Westbury's merits, and his own true regard for him. I clearly understood, by slow degrees, that he was no stranger either to our mutual attachment or the singular footing it is on; and I could perceive that my Lord had done noble justice to my conduct. Yet, ah, my dear! had I not deserved this, the frailty would, you see, have been equally confided; and I should unconsciously have become the secret object of Trevilian's contempt, while I thought my disgrace known only to his friend.

Mr. Trevilian is considerably past the meridian of life; which gives him an air different from that you would look for in Lord Westbury's chosen associate. His features are ordinary; but the turn of his countenance is prepossessing and sensible. He is the man of fashion entirely; with a strong understanding, and an insinuating address. He gains greatly on you, as you more and more know him. He came too well recommended to leave me the free use of my judgement.

He was obliged to acknowledge that he had been premature in the delivery of Lord Westbury's packet. A fine story he, no doubt, made to his friend of the conduct of

Your

CECILIA RIVERS!

LETTER XLV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

YOUR sister, no doubt, my dear, has informed you that my body partook of the sufferings of my mind, and a feverish complaint, apparently of the pleuritic kind, not only confined me, but obliged me to forbear writing. That amended without medical aid; but, had I been dying, I must have recovered when such a specific presented itself as Lord Westbury!—Yes, I have once more seen him, my Amelia!—once more I have gazed upon that face "which I must ever love" —and, yet, which I never hoped again to behold—pale, pale, indeed!—changed almost to yellowness! and nothing, surely, was ever so thin! I fear that the news of my tedious indisposition made him venture abroad at the risk of his own health. Unsuspecting that a happiness so

great awaited me, I had, with some difficulty, reached a little arbour, where I was sunning myself, and perusing his letters (as if I had them not by heart); when, raising my eyes at the sudden approach of some one, I perceived the most dear of men coming slowly down the walk, with his arm in a scarf. I clasped my hands in, I may say, an agony of joy, and sprung forward to meet him; but finding my knees entirely fail me, I sunk into my seat, and faintly repeated—"Am I, indeed, so happy—so beyond measure blest, as once more to behold you?—O my Lord, your sufferings have not exceeded mine!"

"Rather ask me how I dare approach you, after having caused them!" said he, kindly supporting me with the only dear arm he could command.

"Ah! I have suffered too much for my last angry fit, to have a grain of petulance in store. Yet, what offence could I not forgive to you at this moment!"

"You have chosen your moment of indulgence well," returned he laughing,

and casting a glance on his wrenched arm.

"You are very considerate in teaching me discretion, however, my Lord; and, now I think of it, how could you be so imprudent as to come here?—Sick or well, you must be known."

"Can you love, and ask that question?" returned he tenderly. "I came to receive from your eyes a sympathetic assurance of your continued regard, from your lips a pardon for my friend's indiscretion, and from your hands those precious letters which I consented to relinquish only with my life."

"Ah, my Lord, I find you know too well how to manage me! But remember, that in my reputation I intrust the second good on earth to your prudence! Beware how you destroy by your life, what even in dying you thought yourself obliged to preserve."

"Trevilian drove me here in his phaeton, and set me down. No servants of mine attended; and from them alone

could you apprehend a discovery—especially, altered as I must be. Only raise your eyes to mine, and tell me whether I may not claim a little indulgence yet. But what, my Cecilia! can you dread from a man just risen from almost his death-bed?—Had you not power enough over me, in the glow and vigour of life, to mould my will to yours?—and have I not since had ample leisure to consider your conduct and my own?—*That*, I confess, was the object of my contempt, while yours appeared with angelic sublimity. I now think, I even more honour than I love you. Possessed, as I believe myself, of your whole confidence and attachment, I am resolved to be satisfied with those. —Aid me to support principles so just, and make me truly worthy of yourself;—whose life supplies such an example of purity, that I can hardly suppose shaking off mortality will more enlarge or refine your nature."

O flattery! how dangerous art thou

in the garb of affection!—Never did Lord Westbury appear to me so irresistible!—The sincere air of self-contempt—his noble energy—in short, I never felt myself so very a woman as while he was exalting me almost into an angel!

A long and unreserved conversation followed. I required and learnt all the particulars of that almost fatal quarrel. I would have spoken my father's sentiments on duels; but he bantered me out of it. "Do I not allow you to maintain your virtue your own way?" said the pleasant traitor; "and will you not allow me to do the same by my honour?—Shall we come to a compromise?—Will you be my convert, if I become yours?"

"Pshaw, nonsense! how dissimilar the cases!"

"So every one thinks when his opinion is thwarted. However, you may make yourself easy as to the future; since the man who once draws his sword with proper spirit, may generally sheath it for

the rest of his life. But, to change the subject, do you live upon air here?—Do you never dine?"

"Dine!—Heavens! you do not think of dining with me, to be sure?"

"If you knew how faint I feel," said he in his most imploring accent, "you would not send me away without some refreshment."

"Ah, my Lord! get well again as quick as you can, for that pale face overpowers my best resolutions.—My poor dinner has been ready, I dare say, these two hours, and now must be literally cold."

"Cold or hot, you must let me share it," said he; "for Trevilian is not to fetch me till he has dined: and you could not have the inhumanity to turn me out, faint with hunger, and on foot."

I was obliged to go to Mrs. Ash, and entreat her to get a chicken boiled; which, to do the good woman justice, she ordered as quick as possible. Having carried this point, Lord Westbury soon found him-

self in so sweet a humour, that he made a perfect conquest of my poor landlady: who taking him for my brother, thought that she could not do a kinder thing, than to treat him with a full account of all I had suffered; while I sat covered with confusion, yet not daring to silence her. "I don't think Miss has eat as much as the breast of a chicken since she first heard of your melancholy accident, Sir," concluded she. He cast down his eyes, as he often does when an ironical speech hovers on his lips. "Oh, my dear Madam," returned he, "never brother and sister loved as we do!"—Judge whether I had not some difficulty to keep my countenance. Mrs. Ash now made a discovery which has raised my vanity to the highest pitch; though probably it sprang in her mind from our supposed consanguinity. She fancies that there is an amazing likeness between us; and my Lord looked as pleased as if I had been a model of beauty. The best of the matter is, that I half adopt her whim; and run

to the glass every five minutes, to see if I can find any pretence for doing so.

Mr. Trevilian came at seven; and, to say truth, though I tempt you to smile, I wished him away. Lord Westbury I could manage while alone, and Mrs. Ash knew him not; but to encounter the scrutinising eyes of a worldly shrewd man, however warm his good will to one or both parties, was more than I had courage for. Lord Westbury, on the contrary, delighted to have thus brought together the two people on earth most dear to him, became so exquisitely agreeable, that I was almost obliged to drive him out of the house, or he would have sat till the evening air seized on his wound.

He would not recollect the letters, and in my embarrassment I totally forgot them. I see he means to make an errand for them every day, without once calling them to mind after he is admitted. I could soon refresh his memory; but have not the heart to make a new quarrel, when I have not yet done grieving for the last.

LETTER XLVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

YOU have not read Swift for nothing, my dear.—What an excellent *flapper* he would have thought you!—I am obliged to attend to you even at this distance; and my dozing discretion *is* roused. But you must not arrogate to yourself the merit of this effort, since I was fixed on making it ere your letter arrived: but well I know you will not dispute the honour of the victory, so that it is obtained.

How easy is it to dictate to others, when far, too, from the scene of action, and not impressed by the reproaches which love gives such force to!—*You must*, and *you ought*, are terms we all can apply to any person but ourselves.—Alas, my dear! think how I tremble lest he should relapse into error!—think what a delight I have

in his society!—what a pleasure in his confidence!—what a pride in his respect! —Oh! think what a task it must be, at one moment to give firmness to a temper like mine, and to over-rule his!

There is yet another difficulty—I love him, and he knows it.—I have lost that authority a woman always possesses, while a lover doubts his own power: shall I add, that I have lost, too, all wish of maintaining any?—During a conduct so unexceptionable as Lord Westbury's at present, I know not how I can exclude him from my society; nevertheless, I again repeat, that I mean to do it: the difficulty only adds to the necessity; and while I read what I have already written, I start at my own danger.—Yet I must allow myself a little leisure to concert some plan that may save me from giving him pain, or myself the pang of incurring his resentment.—Why, why did not Heaven, with the same fond partiality, give me a form like his own?—Then might I have been the companion of his life with

out fear or jealousy;—then no more this timid heart would throb for his danger with fruitless apprehension, but send forth all its little strength to succour him; and, if he fell, the same grave might inter both: for, even as a friend, I could not survive him.—Amelia! it is hard enough to be denied happiness by those who are, by both custom and nature, empowered to withhold it.—Oh! think then what it must be to a heart so exquisitely susceptible as mine, to deny felicity to itself!

He does *not* dine here constantly;—some part of every day he certainly spends with me: and I own I fear Mr. Trevilian's eye so much, that I am not very urgent with him always to be a third in our party. My Lord (wicked creature!) enjoys the distress that gentleman's presence gives me; and says that I never look so well. Yesterday Lord Westbury came alone, as I understood, through Kensington Gardens; of course his carriage and servants waited in the Park. Notwithstanding these precau-

tions, it is astonishing to me that he should escape observation:—he who gives dignity to the plainest garb; whose conversation and address show a soul so refined, with manners so polished—nay, when was his person overlooked?—Even I do not always recollect myself: I forget he is to be but Edward, and once called him my Lord.—Had I, however, been guilty of a crime, I could not have looked more like a culprit.—I am terrified at all these things, and will run over the arrangement, to fortify myself against he comes, that I may oblige him to take back his packet as he sent it. Those odious bank-notes have made one wrangle between us already.—He will receive only the letters; and I will not deliver them, unless he takes the more valuable notes.

Every apprehension for his health is, however, thank God! totally dispelled. His arm recovers its strength, and is taken from the scarf. His manly cheek glows again with beauty; and his whole

carriage resumes that elastic volatility which adds grace to symmetry. I find myself infinitely better too. A mutual interest we take in each other's health, operates towards restoring it to both beyond all the prescriptions of art. Among other reasons, I become habituated to associating with him, and no longer feel oppressed with those cruel tremors which shatter the constitution. I can think before I speak; and, yet more strange! speak what I have thought, in proper language, and without any hesitation—which once appeared impossible: the strong desire of pleasing was often in me fatal to the power.

Ah! I see him coming; and the strength I boasted of, quite deserts my poor nerves, as this scrawl plainly indicates. However, I will recollect all your advice, and become a Stoic, if ever a lover was one.

I have, at last, compelled him to accept again those lavish marks of his affection; though, had I not been on the point

of tearing all my own letters to pieces, I could not have succeeded. Finding that I really meant to do this, he snatched the whole packet in anger away; saying that he would, in spite of my pride, retain some proofs of the love I once bore him, and would no longer offend me with the presence of a man whose greatest fault was a boundless tenderness for me, and whose anxious efforts to please were ever so cruelly misconstrued. He caught up his hat, and hastily passed through the garden, with a disordered dignity of mien, and a complexion beautifully heightened by pique.—"Ah! I may never more behold him!" cried I to myself, recollecting that he had the same air when we parted in the field. I followed to the garden-gate; but he disdained to look behind him: at length I caught his eye as he turned down the lane, and, kissing my hand, I own I gave him a smile of invitation. Faster than he went he now flew back, to entreat my pardon; which, charmed with a temper so yielding, I fully accord-

ed: and enjoyed, for the first time, the transport of reconciliation, and the delight of forgiving.

I have thought of one way to end his visits; and shall fabricate an epistle, as soon as I finish this, to tell him that a lady at the next door has recollected his person, and only waits his next visit here to satisfy herself, and slander me: that as my situation at this place will become extremely irksome, I am preparing to quit it; and, to save myself the same kind of apprehension, have provided a home out of his knowledge; which, by the love he bears me, I conjure him not to inquire into. I hardly doubt his consideration for my reputation; and, therefore, think he will not venture another visit to this confined place: I have a kind of predilection for it; and shall reluctantly leave the spot where I first saw the chosen of my heart without constraint.

I have exerted all my address in writing this letter, and it is already gone.—Now I may surely claim your applause.—

Alas! I know how dearly I purchase it!

Direct as usual; I shall certainly stay here: nor must I quit the house, even for a visit, lest my secret should be betrayed.

LETTER XLVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Craven-Hill.

I HAVE been thus long obliged to reply by others to your inquiries after my hand. Though it was only the left I injured, I never attempted to use it, that I did not find an increased inflammation in the other. When you know how this hurt was really caused, you will wonder I had the resolution to wait till it was doing well to apprise you of the fact.—What a situation have I been in since last I wrote to you! I was surely born to be the sport of fortune, and the wretch of sensibility!—Hear, then, an adventure which,

but for your reliance on my veracity, would probably appear to you among those absurd and romantic inventions that make us children of retirement tremble at the arts of London.

You remember a letter I projected to Lord Westbury, which is indelibly impressed on my mind by the following circumstances. Having dispatched it, I went to wander in the environs of the house I live in, as some strangers had driven to the door to view the lodgings; which I occupied on cheap terms, from agreeing to quit them should a better tenant offer. The coach stood in my way; but I saw in it only two elderly ladies, genteelly dressed, who looked out after me, and, calling their footman, marked me to him. Not knowing either of them, I passed on; and turned, to avoid the sun, down a lane which conducts us to the high-road. The coach soon overtook me in the middle of it, and was immediately stopped. The footman descended, and very civilly inquired if I was

Miss Rivers. On my assenting, he informed me that his lady requested the favour of speaking one word to me. I then advanced towards the carriage; and the coachman, having in the interval quitted his box, opened the door, supposing, as I guessed, that I was going to get in. One of the ladies again inquired my name; and the servant behind me requested that I would draw near, and speak loud, as she was deaf. I complied; and was quite close to the carriage, when the two men, in one moment, lifted me in as it were by magic; and, shutting the door, drove on as quick as thought.—I, as might be expected, fell into the bottom of the coach; from whence, however, I as expeditiously arose: and, questioning the two women who they were, and what they meant, attempted to let down the glass; which, to my great surprise, I found had been fastened. The women endeavoured to compose me, by vehement assurances that I should come to no harm: but a scheme so deeply concerted did not

strike me as a jest; and my situation became yet more serious, when, on finding me resolved to get out, each of my companions took a hand by main force, and seated me between them. I now felt myself totally in their power, and quite uncertain what use they meant to make of it.

My imagination went through all my connexions, to fix upon an author for this insult, ere it whispered the name of Lord Westbury: yet not finding any other person whom I could rationally suspect, I was obliged to conclude the base machination to be his. "Can he, can he," cried I to myself, "in whom I have 'garnered up my heart,' conspire with venal wretches to rob me of myself? And what from such an effort can he hope? Have I not resisted his entreaties? How can he then suppose that force will subdue me?" Yet, as these thoughts rushed impetuously through my mind, floods of tears fell from my eyes. I resolved to collect my faculties, that I might resist despair, and never

to be wanting to myself. I observed shortly afterwards, that we were driving through Hammersmith; and found that the carriage made too much noise for me to be heard if I screamed, for the glasses were both up, and fixed. I made an effort to dry my tears, and the least odious of my two companions released my left hand. A knot of ladies and gentlemen were at that moment close to the carriage; when suddenly starting up, I dashed my hand through the glass and waved it to them, then dropping with blood. The party stood still, stared, wondered, commented, but took no step that might stop the coach; and the vile wretches with whom I was, enraged at finding my character so intrepid, drew in the bloody hand, and, by so doing, mangled it yet more. The mingled agony of my body and my mind made me fall back almost insensible. I just remember that the women attempted to staunch the blood and wrap my hand in my handkerchief; with vague expressions of anger she apprehen-

ded from somebody. Who, who can this be, thought I, who dreading not barbarity, yet shrinks from its consequences? One woman touched a spring, and the broken glass gave way to a blind; but both now held my hands completely fast, so that I had not the opportunity of motion. After the effort I had vainly made, I no longer controlled the bitterness of my heart; but my execrable companions were inured to misery, nor could I provoke or win a reply. I plainly saw that we were out of the high road, and passing through by-lanes; which made it impossible that any assiduity should trace the coach, even should humanity be awakened by my desperate call upon it. No longer having strength for further experiments, and regretting, too late, my folly in disabling one hand when I might have need of both, I now sunk to entreating my companions to release me; offering them my little all: which was, alas, too little to tempt them! Receiving no answer but a shake of the head, I again burst into tears, reproaches,

and despair. I could not but suppose that they were intent on losing time, or eluding pursuit, by the long and circuitous road the carriage took. Alas, my dear! they had no pursuit to apprehend: your poor Cecilia, in this busy world, knows not one human being on whose exertions she has a right to reckon. I think we must have gone over Fulham-bridge;—we certainly passed that of Westminster, in returning to town. I fancy it was in some part of Saint James's the coach stopped, at a door which opened between two mean houses into a long well-lighted passage. One of the furies got out before me; and I instantaneously cast my quick eyes around, without seeing a single human being but one chairman asleep on his poles; to him, however, I flew, and, falling suddenly upon my knees, waked the man by the violent pluck I gave to his coat. "For the love of God," cried I, "if you have wife or daughter, assist a poor young creature thus ensnared!—Save, save me, for

their sakes!" The wretch, with a strong brogue, replied—"Auh! be aasy, my jewel; for, upon my conscience, you'll one day tell me how much you think yourself obliged to my good ladies here, for all the trouble they take with you.—By my soul, they will make a bit of a gentlewoman of you!" I was now carried rather than led in; and the doors being shut, in vain the passage echoed with my cries: the voices of the two women being yet louder, the sound of misery was undistinguished. I found that they were dragging me into a handsome room; and casting my eyes around, full of the deepest scorn, they rested—not on Lord Westbury, my dear, but his brother—yes, Clifford himself stood, to my astonishment, before me. Though this increased my danger, it gave such a relief to my feelings that I could have fallen on my knees, and thanked Almighty God as for a deliverance. The wretch drew gaily towards me, who was fixed like a statue; when one of the women insolently told

him, that the next time he invented such an errand he might execute it himself, for one so troublesome never fell to her share before. I surveyed her, and her vile employer, with equal contempt. "By what right," at length cried I, "do either of you thus treat a person who is your equal—at least in the birth-right of freedom?" Clifford gave no answer, but nodded to the women to leave us. My danger was, perhaps, at that moment, magnified by my fears, for I was almost frantic; and holding out my wounded hand—"Stay, wretches," cried I, "and hear me! You have abetted this man in betraying and maiming my person; but neither he nor you can shake the resolution of my heart. I well know the redress which the law allows me, and be assured I will demand it: but should I fail on earth, there is an awful God will give it me hereafter. Remember that, and tremble!"—"Manage your little lunatic yourself," said one of the women sneeringly

to Clifford, as she left the room; "we have brought her to you, and fulfilled our agreement." I was, indeed, an idiot to threaten those with the vengeance of God, to whom Sir John Fielding is a far greater object of terror.

They were no sooner gone, than Clifford, in a palliating tone, began—

"Come, come, my dear Miss Rivers, it is surely carrying it too far thus to resent the happy artifice of a neglected lover! I thought that your whole sex admired address. Lay aside this anger; and remember you are not now professing to teach those rigid morals that never yet made one human being happy."

"They have a power, Mr. Clifford, far beyond that:—they enable us to encounter every kind of insult and misery. How could I otherwise support sorrow, pain, and injury? Why you have thus inveigled me, I know not. If you doubt my conduct, you have a proof that it is the result of principle. The fortitude

which enabled me thus to maim my hand, may one day make you, daring as you are, tremble!"

"Good God! how could your hand be thus wounded? Let it be dressed this moment. One of the women—"

"Neither of them shall contaminate me, Sir, by a touch. You have too much humanity, Mr. Clifford, to injure further a helpless young creature. How could you hope that she who refused to become your wife, would ever stoop to become your mistress?"

"If I must be explicit, Miss Rivers, it is because she has since deigned to become the mistress of another."

"Sir!"

"Spare your disdainful looks, madam; I am well aware of what I advance. My brother's devoirs have not been so harshly rejected. I am not the unobserving fellow you imagined."

"Well, Sir! were it even so, and I regarded Lord Westbury with partiality,

would that authorise you to hope any thing the more?"

"A little plain speaking, my dear girl, will save a world of circumlocution. When I offered you my hand, it was with my whole heart. I loved you too well to wish to obtain you by any means disgraceful to yourself. I was refused. My condition in life, and give me leave to say my personal advantages, made this a very extraordinary procedure. I knew your sex and the world too well, to suppose that such an offer would have been declined, had not an object more near the heart been in view. I resolved to discover yours, and did it with so much ease that I wondered at my former blindness. Ned's attachment was hardly more apparent than your own. Did I like you the less? Not at all. I thought you a kind, disinterested, spirited girl. I shall not presume to insinuate any reason for your finding it convenient to leave Lady Westbury. I shall not comment upon your receiving the

private visits of her husband at a private lodging. Nay, I know all—the regularity of his letters, and the exactness of your replies. I even know that the happy lover was very lately screened under the title of the near relation. Confess that I have been generous in keeping, unbribed, your secret; when a single word from me would have destroyed your reputation, both with my sister and the world."

What a speech was this! No words can convey to you the indignation that filled my heart, flashed from my eyes, and burned on my cheeks. At length I cried, with the contempt I felt—

"No wonder, Sir, if, judging the hearts of others by the corrupt one within your own bosom, you should thus misconstrue the conduct of a nobleman whom it is your highest honour to call brother. But even admitting your vile surmises were true, and I had been the victim of a weak passion for Lord Westbury, could you hope to rival him? Superlative vanity! Perhaps, knowing both as I have reason

to do, I should think it a less misery to be his mistress, than your wife."

This, you will say, was very bitter, because very true: but think what a provocation I had.

"That is a question," returned he sarcastically, "which it will never more be in your power to answer. But pr'ythee let us have done with preaching. Come, compose yourself: be a little civil, and I will even forget the impertinence of your last speech. Your secret may still be safe with me; nor shall Ned ever have reason to question your fidelity. Get down from these tragedy stilts; you are in the temple of Pleasure, and must bow to the goddess."

"Infamy, scorn, and remorse, dwell in this house, and I equally loathe them and you. You either meanly mistake, or voluntarily question, my character: but beware you presume not on your own conclusions. Rather than become the wretch you suppose, or would make me, I should, I think, venture to decide my own destiny."

"Heyday! here are fine heroics! Why, my dear Lucretia the second, you are now most outrageously virtuous!—These are mighty pretty flights of fancy: but we have no worse poison here than Champagne; and I really do not think I shall allow you the satisfaction of thus setting the world in a blaze by going out of it."

"I am actuated, Sir, by juster motives."

"Upon my soul, Miss Rivers, you recollect the theory of virtue admirably, though a little out of practice: for, if you were to wear those pretty lips out in swearing that you quitted Lord Westbury's house to receive his friendly visits in a private lodging, you would neither convince the world, nor me, that it was to read Seneca or study Plato. You are young and charming: he is gay, gallant, successful."

Till now, my spirits had been kept up by anger and disdain: they suddenly failed me, my hand grew very painful, and

a sickliness I could hardly contend with obliged me to change my tone.

"Cruel and injurious as your surmises concerning me have hitherto been, Mr. Clifford, I think I could pardon them all, if you would learn to judge me better. I will not veil one truth from you, nor repeat one falsehood. Your penetrating eyes have too surely learned from mine the sorrowful secret of my soul. Alas! that partiality you reproach me with, punishes itself: it has, I will own, wholly robbed me of peace; but not sunk me to infamy. Now, how, Sir, can you hope to subdue a woman who has conquered herself even in the most tender instance? —You tell me you love me;—so does Lord Westbury: yet I found him no less generous than impassioned. Be entirely his brother; resemble him wholly; nor add to the sufferings of one who hardly can endure those that have already fallen on her. Never yet was distress like mine counterfeited. Oh, let me esteem you!"

"Why will you be half sincere?" re-

turned he with a softened air.—"Bewitching creature! who can hear you plead unmoved?"—Pausing a moment, however, he relapsed into the hardened libertine. "I must be decisive, Miss Rivers. I have not taken all this trouble, or bestowed all this expense, for nothing. I will not deceive you. This house is the asylum of uncircumscribed pleasure; and no one here will interrupt us. I have taken care to inform my brother of your absence; and as he will be led to suppose it voluntary, he will not seek you. Here, therefore, with no better, and no worse, a companion than myself, shall you stay till you become more reasonable. Judge what Ned will conclude, should any of the loquacious ladies of this family inform him where you now take up your abode. You have not the smallest chance of escaping their tongues, but by making it worth my while to release you."

The letter which I had written to Lord Westbury an hour before I was trepanned now pressed upon my recollection. Some

dæmon below surely dictated it, to co-operate with the one above-ground, now tormenting me! — Distracted at the strange confirmation this might give to whatever slander my Lord should hear, I think I could have pierced Clifford to the heart.—Indeed, from the moment I found who the wretch was that betrayed me, I very sensibly felt the difference of an attack from the man one loves, and him whom one does not.

"Well, then, Sir," cried I, starting from my knees, "enjoy a satisfaction which fiends alone would envy you. Rob me of the only blessing I possess, in your brother's esteem. Grieved as I must be to lose that, it is a less loss than my own."

Convinced, by the increasing energy of my voice and air, that he had nothing to hope from my fears or debasement, he approached me with eyes—oh, my dear! how unlike Lord Westbury's!—I threw mine around in wild distress, and fixed them on a case of knives that stood on a

side-board at my elbow. I made a sudden snatch at a fork, and, grasping it very fast, pointed it towards him; then, with a deep and resolute tone, said,

"One step nearer, Sir, and take the consequence!"

How timid, how apprehensive is guilt! With what ease might the wretch have wrested an implement so inadequate to my purpose from the trembling hand that held it, which could receive no assistance from the other!—But he stopped short; and, affecting an air of contempt and indifference, turned on his heel, repeating—

"Upon my soul, you are one of the strangest girls I ever met with!—Indulge your whim, Madam, pray. Brandish your new-fashioned dagger as long as you like: I should scorn to use force towards any woman, much more to you."

I was extremely glad to hear this, however insolent his mode of conveying the information: but not thinking an im-

plicit reliance on such a man prudent, I retreated to a corner of the room, that I might not be surrounded. Fully determined to use the fork, if I thought it necessary; and though I was hardly able to support myself, and my arm grew more and more painful, here I made up my mind to remain. As to Clifford, he threw himself along the sofa, with a most impertinent nonchalance. Hardly can I forbear smiling now at the recollection of the scene. Imagine me, my dear, with my hair loose over my shoulders; my bonnet half off; one hand wrapt in a bloody handkerchief, and the other pointing my "new-fashioned dagger," as he sneeringly called it; while, to appearance, not a creature meant to attack me.—Can you conceive any thing more grotesque? —Nevertheless, I am persuaded that he lay planning some precious mischief; when one of the women hastily entered, and whispered him. By his casting his eyes around, I guessed that he inquired of her if all was secure; which she an-

swered in the affirmative. Then, turning negligently to me, he yawned; advised me to sit down and rest myself; be a good girl, and accept his offers: then following the woman, he locked the door after him. I had this only moment in my favour; and seeing that the bolt was strong, I drew it; then ran to the windows; but they were fastened by some imperceptible spring. I, however, secured two more forks, lest the first should be taken from me, and flew into the next room. How I shuddered at finding it to be a chamber!—The same fastening secured those windows; and I was frantic with the sense of my danger, when I perceived another door almost behind the bed. I looked through the key-hole, for that too was locked, and saw some stairs which I was sure could not be those I had seen when I entered the house. My strength was tried in vain to force back the lock; but, with a knife and a shilling, I turned the screws of the receiver of the bolt, and found them give way. Con-

ceive my joy!—I had still, however, much to dread. I heard footmen in the hall; and having learnt, from my application to the chairman, that I had no resource in the humanity of the vulgar, at least in that neighbourhood, I lingered in agony, nor ventured to descend. At this dreadful crisis I heard Clifford thundering at the other door, and, recommending myself to God, dared every other danger by rushing down stairs.

I yet paused a moment, from finding that the men were at this juncture agreeing to adjourn, and drink at a neighbouring house. Scarce, however, were they down the steps, ere I was in the hall. A servant in a parlour perceived me, and I her. She hastily pursued me into a court; where seeing a gentleman walking, whose only recommendation to me was his having a sword on, breathless with haste and fear, I caught his arm, indistinctly repeating—"Save me!—oh, save me!" He probably mistook both my words and my action; for he dropped his arm, and I

fell to the ground: but, discerning that I was in some distress, he kindly stooped, and inquired how he could serve me. The woman-servant, too, had joined us, and, assisting to raise me, awakened all my terrors.—"Oh, Sir!" cried I, "that house—that house!"

"Surely I know that voice?" said Lord Westbury, raising my bonnet to examine my features.—Yes, my dear, it was my Lord, indeed!—sent surely by Providence to save me from a danger, which he alone could have saved me from without bloodshed. Nor will you wonder that I did not know him, when you recollect that I was scarce myself, and, like a person bitten by a mad-dog, saw Clifford in every object around me.

"Do I see Miss Rivers?" cried he in a voice expressive of deep surprise.

"Yes, my Lord," returned I, yielding for once to impulse, and claiming support from his arms; "you do, indeed, see that persecuted, unhappy being!—I will not

say wholly deserted, since you are sent to my assistance."

By this time a whole family seemed collected at the door of the house; but finding, by what passed, that a stranger richly dressed knew me, they hung back, and talked low, with an air of perplexity.

I am not able to finish my tale; but you may be easy, for I had found a noble protector.

LETTER XLVIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

I RESUME, without a break, my narrative.

"How is it that I find you here, Cecilia?" said Lord Westbury.

"Oh, my Lord! I have been terrified to death!—vilely trepanned!"

"Trepanned!" cried he, drawing his sword indignantly—"Point me out the villain, and his life shall answer it!"

At this instant I perceived Clifford enter the court; no doubt from the door through which I was first carried. He knew not my Lord, whose back was to him, but eagerly advanced; while I hung more importunately upon Lord Westbury; who only imputed this to my fear of his taking some desperate vengeance. But never surely did conscious guilt more distort a human countenance than it did Clifford's, when, from the haughty and elevated tone, he recollected his brother's voice.—Heavens! what a look he gave me!—as if I had, by supernatural means, called the man whom I had owned I adored to my aid!—My Lord, wholly unsuspicious of him, and too intent on my looks to observe his, cried—

"Dear George! whatever good fortune brings you to this strange place, take charge of Miss Rivers, till I discover who has thus basely insulted and ensnared her.—Have you seen, Madam, or can you guess, who he is?"

What a question was this!—Had I

been sincere, I knew not the consequence in such a moment.—Faltering, blushing, almost sinking to the earth, I pronounced a faint negative.—I glanced my eyes, a moment after, on Mr. Clifford's face, and saw that it had restored his composure at once.

Lord Westbury was leaving me in his brother's care, while he prosecuted his inquiries; when, terrified at being one moment alone with Clifford, I caught his arm again—"You shall not, must not, leave me, my Lord!" cried I.

The dear man, conceiving this to be only a natural effect of tenderness, squeezed my hand, and, drawing it fondly through his arm, repeated, in a voice of softness—"Nay, then, you must again enter this den of iniquity with me."

Mr. Clifford thought proper to step on before us; and, doubtless, by some gesture which the miscreants comprehended, silenced them concerning himself: for all, and there were many, pleaded ignorance as to how, or for what pur-

pose, or by whose orders, I had been brought there; insisting that their *ladies* were in the country.

"Tell them, wherever they are," said the dear man fiercely, "that Lord Westbury and Mr. Clifford will make this adventure cost them dear; since, if money or influence can procure justice, this lady shall not want it. Even at this moment, did I not respect her too much, I would drag forth the harridans from the deepest of their own vicious retreats, and deliver them up to the laws."

He turned from the detested place, and, in leading me down the steps, first observed my poor wounded hand, by the light of the lamps. Hardly did all he had suffered himself cost him a severer pang than he then felt. When told how it had been thus injured, he inveighed bitterly against the horrid women; and insisted on going with me himself to the surgeon whose skill had restored him, that he might see my arm dressed. He left me a single moment, in spite of all

I could urge, to send away his own coach and servants; and then dispatched his brother to get a hackney one. I understood, in the short interval, that he only passed through this court, in his way to a concert-room, because one street was full of carriages, and another blocked up by paviours.—See on how slight an incident depended my deliverance!—My Lord, who from motives of respect to me, still insisting on taking Clifford with us, now ascended the hackney-coach, where he entreated to hear the history of my *enlevement*. But surely no reproach could be so bitter as those appeals he continually made to Clifford on the inhumanity, the infamy, of this procedure: while, at the same time, he guarded all his own expressions strictly, that the interest he took might only appear that of humanity; little aware that, an hour before, his brother had been very exactly informed, from my own lips, of the tie which bound our hearts together.—I must confess, I enjoyed, in spite of my suffer-

ing arm, a high triumph over Mr. Clifford; who was obliged absolutely to stigmatise himself, or betray a secret which it was highly his object to conceal.—How must that warm and generous feeling I had so passionately commended in his brother strike even him!—How low must he have sunk in his own opinion!—How abject must he feel himself in mine!—Then, to turn to the chosen of my heart, as my disinterested, noble, intrepid deliverer—Oh! what a pride! what an overwhelming joy!—Where, where is the affinity between minds like these?—and how came nature to bind them by blood?—My Lord leaped out of the coach, to explain himself first to the surgeon; and though I thought that his brother would hardly venture any further insult, it was almost too great an effort for me to stay alone one moment with him: yet I dared not awaken the suspicions of my Lord by detaining him. After several vain efforts to speak, the crest-fallen wretch said—

"After an injury so flagrant, Madam,

how poor an atonement is an apology!—Yet what other can I offer?—You have found a generous way to impress on my mind the impropriety of my conduct; nor will I ever give you further cause of complaint."

He has words at command; but I shall always consider his fine speeches as merely words. However, it was not prudent to seem to do so; and I, therefore, cautiously replied—

"I would not ascribe to myself, Sir, an undeserved merit; and will frankly own, that, in the meanness of concealing your name, I rather considered Lord Westbury's safety than yours. If recollection has, indeed, inclined you to a better mode of thinking and acting, I shall rejoice in it for your own sake; and rely on the assurance you have given me, that your persecution will end here."

Good heaven! what a vindictive eye has this man! How did it measure me in an insolent expressive silence! I was ready to spring out of the coach with

terror, when my Lord appeared to lead me from it. Still respecting my reputation, he obstinately insisted on his brother's company. The dressing my arm was a dreadful operation, as it was absolutely necessary to examine if any broken glass had lodged in the wounds: but Mr. Burroughs informed me that I had then gone through the severest trial, and had only a tedious cure to expect. He further added, that I ought to congratulate myself on having so well escaped from the effects of so rash a manœuvre. Cheered by the voice of Lord Westbury, supported by his arms, what must the torments have been that I could not have borne patiently? I was complimented by all parties, I assure you, on my heroism:—Clifford, indeed, meditated every word and action with a gloomy and mortified air; and truly he made so very poor a figure, that I was not surprised he should do so. It was now late, too late to return to Craven-Hill; and George, having at last obtained my Lord's permission, made his

escape out of the coach, five yards from the surgeon's door, with much the same air a man would from the pillory. Lord Westbury bade the coachman draw up, while we held a council how I should bestow myself; and as the attendance of Mr. Burroughs was indispensable, I judged it best to drive to your brother's, and there take up my abode for the present. This appeared to me the more judicious, as at such a juncture I could not exclude the visits of Lord Westbury, were I again at Craven-Hill.

Great was the surprise of the Forrester family at my late visit in that maimed state; but as such adventures as produced this injury are seldom repeated but to the disadvantage of the innocent sufferer, I thought it most advisable to say that I had been overturned in a hackney coach coming to town. Mrs. Forrester was very kind, and anxious for my welfare: but you know her busy inquiring temper, and can guess whether my tongue would have wanted employment, could

she have known the occurrences of the day. I was not able to close my eyes, from the pain of my hand; and the laudanum which Mr. Burroughs ordered, not being enough to make me rest, entirely disturbed me. I filled up my sleepless night with considering all that had passed; and my Lord's threats of bringing the vile women to justice alarmed me greatly. I received a note from him very early, with little more than a tender inquiry for my health: but not doubting that the messenger would call again in the evening, I prepared, as well as I could, a scrawl against he came. In this I represented that the visits he had paid me, however unobserved and unknown he thought himself, had, by the acknowledgment of those women, been the cause of the base attempt and its consequences; which alone would oblige me hereafter ever to deny him and myself so dangerous an indulgence. I then entreated, since, thanks to God and to himself, I had escaped, in the strong sense of the word, uninjured,

from those wretched women, that he would leave their punishment to some more exasperated sufferer, who had not the same guard to keep respecting the esteem of the world, or by their means had wholly lost it. That in my dependent situation, it was of the first importance to be unnoticed; and he need not be reminded, that fame and infamy are often mere casualties, and affixed by circumstances to the individuals who least deserve them.

He answered, and solemnly promised that his visits should always hereafter be regulated by my will; expressing many fond regrets, that he who would sacrifice his life to save me from sorrow, pain, or insult, had innocently exposed me to all those evils. He, however, differs with me respecting the treatment of those women; offering many reasons why they should be punished by my prosecuting them for seduction only. The argument I use against this proceeding is the strongest, he asserts, that can be urged in its favour; since women, through an amiable

though erroneous delicacy, were almost always averse to exposing greater indignities in a public court, even to obtain justice: and many were soon so won over by the blandishments of vice, as no longer to complain. "But you," he kindly adds, "whose every thought, being laid before the world, could not call a blush into your cheeks, ought peculiarly to assert the rights of your sex; certain to obtain from a court of justice that admiration for your virtue and resolution which is felt by the heart now addressing you."

Could he have convinced me, the fear that an inquiry should bring his brother's share in the base transaction to light, would alone have determined me to allow all the parties to escape. However cogent his reasons, I therefore replied, that he must admit mine to be conclusive in my own case; and, aptly enough, I quoted these lines of Milton—

"For he who tempts, though in vain, asperses
The tempted with dishonour foul; suppos'd
Not incorruptible of faith—not proof
Against temptation."

I was, after this, obliged to give up my pen; for my arm, though not the one employed, was greatly inflamed. I only yesterday gained permission to write a line.

Adieu

LETTER XLIX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Hanover-Square.

I ONCE thought, my dear Amelia! that, to obtain an easy livelihood, we need only cultivate and employ, to the utmost, our faculties; nor could these fail to procure us the recommendation of the judicious. But, alas! so many unforeseen casualties oppose the success of the most active minds, that hardly can those compelled to encounter the world hope any thing from their own exertions. From the first family I entered, under the fairest auspices, I was expelled with ignominy: from the next (ah, that dear next!) self-

banished: and from the third—I know not what yet; but foresee that my stay will not be long.—Why, why was I not early habituated to some humble trade? I should not then have allowed my heart to refine itself above its station; nor should I have had a chance of mingling with any but my equals. Not even pride can enough endear the bounded distinctions of dependent gentility, to recompense us for its inevitable mortifications. If among those whom we approve and esteem we can scarcely find two tempers to which we could with tolerable comfort submit our own, how shall we bear the caprices of the next stranger, after having been sacrificed to those of the last? Nor can we fail to dread even every unavoidable change.

Mr. Forrester, by addressing the curate of his church, obtained his recommendation to Lady Austin, widow of the admiral of that name, and sole possessor of two very large fortunes, his and her own. She is likewise mistress over (for I cannot call

her guardian to) Miss Fermor, Sir Godfrey's granddaughter by a former wife. It is impossible to see Lady Austin without reverence:—A pale expressive countenance, and fine figure, have every advantage which a plain and dignified mode of dress can add. Her manners give grace to age, and grandeur to decay: but, alas! externals are, in her, all! Thus to impress strangers is the sole business of her life. No coquette on a birth-night employs more pains at her toilette, than Lady Austin bestows there every day of her life; and yet she has sense enough to perceive that she cannot hide the ravages of Time; and, by giving way to fretfulness, allows his encroachments to reach even her mind. This Roman matron garb, therefore, results from despair, and its propriety is only accident. Prepared to revenge herself on those who have no share in her mortification, her descent from the dressing-room is dreaded by the whole family; and above all by Miss Fermor, whom both nature and for-

tune have made the innocent victim of her harsh caprices: in this poor thing, every thing offends. If she smiles, it is in ridicule; if she weeps, she is sulky: and "who does she imagine will put up with these airs from a poor dependent?" If she answers these bitter taunts, however modestly, Lady Austin wrests her words into some offensive meaning of which she never dreamed, and then cries, "Upon her word she gets much by hiring a governess to instruct a little pert minx to insult her benefactress! However, since her wit is so sharp, it may serve her for a livelihood; since she very well knows that it is all her father left her." Exhausted at last, she often ends with reproaching herself "for allowing a poor insignificant, whom she might banish from her sight with a word, to play upon the *tenderness* of her nature."

You may judge how a heart like mine revolts at her injustice and meanness: I have not, hitherto, been the object of either; but cannot hope long to

escape, however unoffending. When she leaves us, to tease some one else, my poor young charge bursts into tears and complaints. The misfortune of her birth she daily bewails, as it hinders her from seeking a livelihood. Poor child! she envies even me, she says. Nay, the very domestics; since they have a right to give Lady Austin warning, and seek a pleasanter situation.

What a lecture had Amelia one day for having unwarily pronounced the word grandmother: for, though Lady Austin tyrannises only in that right, she disclaims all relationship to Sir Godfrey's granddaughter.

Miss Fermor already fondly loves me; and indeed well she may—since I fret at her fate almost as much as she does herself. I have promised, if I can, to endure Lady Austin's temper for her sake; yet she daily laments the certainty of losing me. I continually represent to her the necessity and merit of a patient submission to the will of those invested with au-

thority over us. "Authority!" she sighing, replies: "It is a heavy trial, if Lady Austin does not strain hers. God knows, I may be, as she calls me, undutiful; but I feel myself grow above such harsh rebukes. What will be the consequence I know not!"

You cannot imagine what a sweet creature Amelia (for Miss Fermor is your namesake) is. She is just sixteen; yet the girl is almost lost in the woman: and still her form is exquisitely delicate. Her features are good, though not absolutely regular; but her complexion is tinted like a white rose: and, as modesty is the characteristic of her countenance, while sorrow is its habit, no human being can appear more interesting. Her carriage has a careless depression, expressive of her feelings; and her voice a low sweetness, almost tremulous. Her temper is very docile, but her spirits too much reduced ever to rise to vivacity, even out of the old lady's sight. As she never kept any one governess long enough to form her

mind, and the chief study of each has been rather to overturn the system of her predecessor than to make the most of her pupil's capacity, the mind of the sweet Amelia is a kind of wilderness, where flowers and weeds have sprung up promiscuously. A skilful hand might, in time, separate them; but I fear it will not be mine; for such a wretched home as this I can never long endure.

But to finish the description of a day; and, in one, of all I have passed here.—By the time we have dried our tears, put our caps on, and prepared in a stiff manner for a formal dinner, the bell announces it. A train of sycophant servants, in rich laced liveries, surround a table covered with a repast that might serve a corporation; though a little in the taste of the old court. Here we find some decayed Scotch ladies of *faamilies* as old as the creation, at least if we may trust their own accounts. Lady Austin is their countrywoman, and affects their tone and manner so entirely, that to me their dis-

course is almost unintelligible. I once discovered their subject to be education, and, with great deference, uttered a single sentence: but by the astonishment I caused, doubted whether I had really spoken, or the footman behind me; and from that moment I sat as mute as the chair I filled. Poor Miss Fermor never dares to speak, unless she is questioned; and finds even her workbag a resource. The evening generally brings Sir Archibald, the Colonel and Captain Duncannon, Mr. M'Cullen, and some other officers of her Ladyship's acquaintance, whose faces are as antique as their regimentals, and both almost as much so as their pedigrees. They overwhelm Lady Austin with gross adulation; and when that copious subject fails, ransack their brains, or the court-calendar, for a train of family alliances; till, losing their own genealogy among the swarms of ancient *nobeelity*, pride has had its full dose, and avarice calls for the card-table to conclude the evening.

Do not imagine your poor Cecilia, however, is admitted to these splendid parties. No, my dear! I regularly make my exit five minutes after the butler; and, but for the solecism, should be glad to do it in his company, rather than fix the inquisitive eyes of the good ladies collected, for one moment. The long, long afternoon is wholly my own; and I "have room for meditation even to madness." The house is an immense clumsy mansion of the style of the last century—as if Sir Godfrey had taken his enormous ship to pieces, and bestowed the timber in thick window-frames and lumbering cornices: while every ceiling and compartment is stuccoed with as great a variety of ill-fancied devices, as good housewives bestow on a Christmas-pie. Then each pannel presents you a daub which he called a picture: and while you are gazing on a sea engagement, you start on turning round to meet the gigantic representation of the knight, ready to knock you down with his truncheon. In these

apartments I have free leave to wander, listen to the wind, and, surveying the monumental marble chimney-pieces, fancy I see "the mangled Tybalt, yet but green in earth, lie festering in his shroud." If I wish to catch the sound of any voice but my own, I must hang over a staircase wide enough to turn a coach on; and in the busy cheerful hum from the offices below, discern the happiness of being without sensibility or education. Books, Lady Austin interdicts, unless of the useful kind; and, unhappily, I cannot find any amusement in the few which she allows us under that name. I forgot to add, that there is not a possibility of doing, saying, or almost thinking, any thing which she does not know. She is troubled with that certain mark of a little mind, an insatiable curiosity; which extends, not merely to her equals, but to her very servants; and that one is most in favour, who discovers or fabricates a cabal among the rest. Of course, hypocrisy, falsehood, and discord,

reign in the lower regions here, as well as above stairs.

Yet, while tyrannising over Miss Fermor's peace, I can perceive that Lady Austin would gratify her pride, had she any. It is obvious that she intends one day to give the sweet sufferer consequence, and probably fortune. I gathered that she hereafter meant to marry Amelia to a Scotch peer, a cousin of her own. The acceptance of any husband, to extricate herself from such an insupportable bondage, will be, perhaps, the least of Miss Fermor's errors and misfortunes. Alas! is this life? Does all the pleasure of power consist in a cruel exertion of it?

The little history of Mrs. Fermor moved me much. Tormented, like her hapless child, by Lady Austin, and addressed by a lover whose city extraction she was certain no merit could atone for in the eyes of her step-mother, she ran away while her father was on a cruise; who, on his return, adopted the prejudice of

his wife, and renounced her. In poverty and sorrow was her sweet babe born; but that evil was softened by love. Captain Fermor was soon after ordered to the West-Indies, whither his wife accompanied him. A fever carried both off on the voyage; and this infant, with a farewell letter from his only child, was sent to Sir Godfrey. To do him justice, he repented. But, alas! he burnt not his will, which had, in his day of wrath, given all to Lady Austin!

LETTER L.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

ALAS, my dear! I fear that I must wholly hide myself from Lord Westbury, and relinquish the pleasure on which alone I live—his letters. They are too punctually delivered; and Lady Austin has, I think, contrived to be present these three days. I dare not direct them to be kept

by the porter till I come to dress; and it must be owned that so exact a correspondent would excite the curiosity of a person less inquisitive. This morning her severe eye was on me, and I vainly struggled to conceal my pleasure, my fear, my blushes. If his messenger should unwarily name who employs him, how gladly would her servants make a merit of a discovery which their lady might construe to my prejudice. Should she intercept or open a letter—but surely she is above a meanness so contemptible! Yet am I all tremor at the mere idea.

The dull uniformity of this house has given way a little, on the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Monro, a new-married pair: the former is Lady Austin's nephew; and it is supposed that he will be her heir. He is about eight-and-twenty, and might well be termed handsome, had he not suffered self-love to determine the cast of his countenance. His eyes are very dark and very bright: indeed, had I not seen Lord Westbury, I should say that they were

the handsomest in the world. He has a bounded understanding, with some ready wit, and an address insinuating beyond expression. While he says nothing of any importance, he knows how to give importance to that nothing: and is sometimes so agreeable, in spite of his own endeavours, that we wonder he can ever cease to please: but at this crisis, affectation takes place of nature, and saves every person of tolerable sense from the weakness of admiring him. There are, however, always exceptions: as, for instance, his wife, who, it seems, was dying for him; and he daily makes her sensible that the folly was confined to herself, since neither her intractable spirit nor jealous temper can prevent his seeking the tender friendship of every pretty woman whom he meets with.

This pair, however, diversify the scene; and that, to minds naturally active, is a point gained. Vivacity is at times more pleasant than fine sense, and much less liable to disgust us. Yet Mr. Monro is

shrewd and worldly:—apt enough to laugh at all Lady Austin's absurdities whenever she is out of hearing; which gives me a bad opinion of his heart. The foibles of age, and more especially of our relations, claim the respect of silence: but then he obtains the applause of his delighted wife, who mistakes ridicule for wit; and even the subdued Miss Fermor gives him a melancholy smile. Indeed, I cannot wonder that any one pleases her who softens the old lady's humour, or withdraws from her the irksome observation I have mentioned. Mr. and Mrs. Monro inhabit this house only till their own is prepared; and Amelia expects that hour with regret. Yet the mortifying comparison she cannot but make between Lady Austin's conduct towards Mr. Monro and herself, would render him the object of aversion to a heart less generous: for he is daily held forth as a contrast in disposition to the young sufferer; nor can any one presume to suggest to her Ladyship that Monro's temper is unbroken by

the least contradiction, and Amelia Fermor's wounded every hour by tyranny. A mighty merit, truly, in Mr. Monro to seem good-humoured, when he has not the smallest pretence to be otherwise!

In the company of these cousins, Amelia is sometimes allowed to visit, or attend a public place; and in her absence I now lighten the hours with portraying those whom you will, probably, never see: but this effort withdraws my attention from myself, or rather from that other self to whom my every thought so fondly clings.

How inattentive are women, when first married, to their own future prospects! Happiness, at best, is but a transient emotion—gone, as soon as felt: but in the ecstasy of possessing this sovereign good, brides render it yet more evanescent. The softness and delicacy of the female character make tranquillity expected from women on even the most affecting occasions: and how then must the men be offended, when they find their new-married

wives assuming, importunate, and capricious? Wedlock unveils the very soul; and all the habits of decorum, so painfully supported by some of our sex, then frequently relax at once. Mrs. Monro, with many valuable qualities, has this fault in the extreme. Her husband is the sole object of her adoration. He has heard this till it wearies him, till he is even disgusted with what was once his only ambition: yet every time she repeats it, she grounds an imaginary claim on his increased regard. She sets no limit to her weakness. By her own account, she grudges every other woman the mere pleasure of looking at him. She haunts him like a shadow; insists on sitting by his side; and, if he is far enough from her to utter a sentence which she does not hear, she demands aloud what it was, as if she questioned its propriety. Alas! what is all this but rendering herself a legal spy upon his actions, and giving an additional charm to those customs that win him from his duty? She calls her con-

duct fondness, and good nature. Good nature is only useful to soften virtue; and fondness, when it reaches the lips, verges on folly.

LETTER LI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

DO me the justice, my dear, to own that I had discernment enough to foresee my dismission from Lady Austin's family, which this announces. Yet, as more than related to myself occurred yesterday, I will give you its whole history.

I was in bed when Miss Fermor (who had been at Ranelagh) came up to hers, which stands in the same chamber. I was not, however, asleep; and, finding her unusually silent, considered what could make her so. Observing that a fine glow had at once awakened and improved her charms, and that neither her head nor her heart was unoccupied, I now asked her

how she did. She complained, with a sigh, of the headache; which had deprived her of the pleasure of attending Mrs. Monro to her own house, whither that lady was gone. I was soon engrossed by other thoughts, and the night passed away. Lady Austin, at breakfast, proposed that as Amelia was to visit her cousin, and see her new house, I should ride with her in Hyde Park. My situation allows me not a negative, or nothing would have induced me to enter her forlorn chariot, which seems, like my Lord Mayor's, all glass; of course those within it are odiously conspicuous. During our whole ride the old lady turned the discourse, obtrusively, upon myself, my family, my friends; obliging me to give a precise account of my small inheritance; and seeking, assiduously, all those disagreeable, degrading topics which age and fortune seem to give persons of a higher degree a right to inquire into. Knowing her catechising temper, this made little impression on me; and by affecting now to admire one shop,

now another, I endeavoured to evade such questions as most offended my feelings.

At this very juncture we turned into Hyde Park; where, as if on purpose to disconcert me, Lord Westbury and a party of gentlemen rode by. He bowed with the smiling air of polite freedom, and, governed by his heart, (dear man!) checked his horse; but, happily for me, casting his eyes on the arms, and the antique owner, of the antediluvian carriage, he rode on. Lady Austin inquired who he was. I named his title, and distinguished him to her. She paused; then added—"He is a very comely man." (Comely, my dear! there is a praise for the graceful, lovely lord of my heart!) "Seeing him," cried the inquisitive old soul, "brings into my head a question I wonder I never before asked you—what sort of a body (for they tell me his wife had no rank) did he marry?—And pray what made you quit her?"

"Lady Westbury, Madam, is so wholly

unexceptionable in her conduct, that, had not the irregularity of her domestic arrangements affected my health, I should, probably, have remained with her till her lovely daughters needed my instructions no longer."

"So, your ill health obliged you to quit her?—And pray how long since is that?"

"About three months, Madam."

"Three months, is it? What kind of a man, pray, is my Lord?"

"A situation like mine, your Ladyship must imagine, would have left me entirely unacquainted with his character, but from some peculiar circumstances. Lady Sarah Monro, Lord Westbury's aunt, insisted that I should always accompany her nieces when they visited her. I sometimes, therefore, saw my Lord at her house, and may venture to pronounce that he graces the rank he inherits: generous in his nature, polished in his manners, elegant and condescending in his address."

"Condescending enough, truly!" was her short, marked reply. A silence, which I had no right to break, ensued; during which I remained the sole object of her contemplations. Now my features, now my clothes, now my person, engrossed her. O, how proud a heart have I! Long accustomed to inspire confidence, esteem, respect,—to bear to my own little circle the assurance of innocence and dignity in my very aspect,—I rather, I doubt, held myself above than sunk beneath her haughty, insulting scrutiny.

When we alighted the porter delivered me the expected letter. I knew the writing. Lady Austin's quick eye was upon me. I blushed; and putting it, unopened, into my pocket, followed, to deliver to her woman some trifles of the dowager's that I had in my hand. As soon as we reached her ante-room, she threw herself into a chair; and curiosity totally conquering every other feeling,

"Pray, Miss," said she, coolly surveying me from head to foot, "how long

have you corresponded with a peer of the realm?"

"Madam?" returned I, overwhelmed with confusion in a moment.

"The question is answered easily enough," added she in a more forbidding manner—"How long have you corresponded with Lord Westbury?"

I thought I should have sunk at her feet. Recovering myself, however, I firmly inquired by what right she asked so insulting a question.

"Because, child, I know Lord Westbury to have refined address enough to write to you, and elegance enough to endeavour to hide it."

"It is very cruel, Madam, to presume on that malevolence of fortune which throws me into your power."

"O! I am perfectly convinced that I do not presume upon it. But, to bring this to a test, I require only the letter in your pocket."

"No: your Ladyship must pardon me; my letters relate only to myself;

they are my own; nor need I take any such means of vindicating my character."

"And this house, young woman, is mine; where I shall no longer keep a person whose conduct is so questionable. —Refuse to show the letter!—A fine proof of innocence, truly. Can any sufficient reason be assigned for so improper a correspondence?—Pack up your clothes immediately, Miss; and find, in future, some patroness less observing; or take more care to hide your failings. I admit that you are a mighty genteel young body; but, as your talent seems limited to managing your own intrigues, I do not wish you so to accomplish Miss Fermor: to-morrow, therefore, you shall leave her."

I retired: but never wrote poet more truly than the one who said,

"Of all the griefs which harass the distrest,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Nor can Fate wound more deep a gen'rous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart."

Tears are supposed to flow only from

sorrow or joy; but mine are as often excited by anger and disdain. Much as I contemned the poverty of Lady Austin's mind, I felt, too sensibly, the insolence which her fortune sanctioned, and had now only to prepare for my departure.

I was afraid that I should not be allowed again to see the sweet Amelia Fermor, and when twelve arrived gave her up. However, I soon after heard her coming softly into the chamber. I was not able to hide the vexation of my heart, though I had too much prudence to intrust her with its cause. Sitting down on the side of my bed, she, in turn, soothed the irritated feelings of one who had often soothed hers. On learning that I was to leave her in the morning, she unwarily cried out—

"Thank heaven, then, I shall not long outstay you!"

I fixed my eyes on her with eager inquiry. A blushing embarrassment became visible on her sweet countenance; nor was her gentle nature proof against my

request for an explanation: she only exacted from me a promise of secresy. Two hours ago I would not have given this for the world: but the compact between me and Lady Austin was broken; while that my heart had made with Miss Fermor remained still in full force; and I persuaded myself that the conviction she must feel of the tenderness of my motives now for advising her, would give efficacy to my opinion. Could I, indeed, deliver up this sweet creature at once to the whims and severity of her old kinswoman, and the inexperience of her own heart? I had no reason for apprehending that Miss Fermor had ever been led to a great error, and from the consequences of any little one it would be my delight, as well as duty, to save her. Again, therefore, I urged her to confide freely in me.

"Nay," cried she, "I must break a promise if I do: but you have always been so kind to me, that I have not the heart to refuse.—I shall greatly astonish

you. What do you think of my intending to quit Lady Austin's protection, to live with my cousin George, and his Maria?"

"Good heavens! did Mrs. Monro make you, my love, this proposal?"

"Oh, no: she is not my own cousin. It was her husband."

"Why, this will incense Lady Austin at once against you both for ever."

"Ay; but how will she know what is become of me?"

"Ah, poor child!" thought I, "here is a fine plot on both thy innocence and fortune! Pray, when was this scheme first suggested?"

"Oh, a fortnight ago; but we settled it all only this morning. I pretended to have the headache, in hopes that my Lady would take you out with her, instead of me; and George had agreed to fetch me himself to dinner. For once things fell out as I wished. He came sooner than I expected. How it made my heart ache,

when he went away, to be left behind, in this dismal, rumbling house, while he and Maria are to live in a fairy palace!"

"What, then, you are publicly to live in Mr. Monro's house?"

"No, to be sure; for then my Lady would soon have fetched me back again, and been more strict than ever. You shall hear how we settled it. To be sure, I lead a shocking life here; and that George and Maria continually told me. Indeed, I must say, that they have always endeavoured to soften Lady Austin: they have been quite a brother and sister to me.—Well, as we were at Ranelagh the other night, while waiting for the fireworks, the crowd parted me from the other ladies: cousin George, however, took the greatest care of me. He said I grew very thin; and he was quite miserable at seeing me so; as well as at leaving me behind, when they went to their own house. Indeed, nothing, he added, but the fear of disobliging Lady Austin prevented their taking me with them.—'And what says my little

Amy to that?' added he, squeezing my hand so kindly.

"I answered, that 'I should then be as happy as I now was wretched.' And, indeed, I spoke only the truth; for it must be delightful to live with them both, surely.

'Why, then, Amy, I have considered till I have found out how this might be done, without offending my scrupulous Maria. You can easily get out of the odious house you live in; and I will convey you to that of a friend of mine, till the bustle of your flight is over. Maria can then fetch you, and we may all go down to my seat in Scotland together. You must assume another name till Lady Austin dies; and she may look all the rest of her days, in vain, for you.—Oh, how pleasant may this little project make the remainder of our lives!'

"I burst, at once, into a transport of tears. He begged me not to make my lovely—yes, he said lovely—eyes red. He called me his innocent little cousin;

his sweet Amelia; and squeezed my hand so that I was ready to scream out.—Yet, oh, how sweet was it to be dear to some one in the world! I wanted to talk the whole over with dear Maria: but he said that our party would suspect, if I spoke to her alone; and then Lady Austin might tax her with my fault, when I was missing; and she was such a dear, particular soul, that he was afraid she would tell the truth if it cost her her life. He dried my eyes himself; and said I must tell the party that I had been frightened by a rocket bursting close to me, because I looked so fluttered. Indeed he told this himself, for I should not have had recollection enough; but I did long to let Maria know how thankful I was for all her goodness. However, I was afraid that he would be displeased."

Imagine what I felt at this artless recital from an innocent heart unconsciously warped. Miss Fermor's speech was interrupted by tears, and her cheeks glowed with blushes ever changing.

These, and her tremor of voice, told me a secret that doubled her danger. I saw she anxiously sought in my face my sentiments on all she had repeated; and therefore, taking her hand, and fixing my eyes stedfastly on hers, I thus broke silence:—

"Last night, my dear, I resigned that authority over your conduct which might inspire you with fear; but I am not less the friend, because only the friend, of Miss Fermor."

At so premeditated a beginning she shrunk, she trembled; but, resuming all her natural softness, threw her arms round my neck—probably only to hide her sweet face from my observation.

"Remember," added I, "that if you think I love you, you must show it by your candour."

"Indeed I have already done so," replied she with some alarm and perplexity.

"Oh, my sweet girl! did you ever tell me that you love Mr. Monro?"

She absolutely shuddered at a word which she, it is plain, had never ventured

to repeat to herself; and, sinking into a chair, covered her face with her hands, faintly repeating—

"Good God! how did you know that?"

"Indeed, my dear, I cannot say that I owe the discovery to your intention." I seized her hand, but it now instantly shrunk from mine. I saw that all her fondness, her confidence in me, was fled; nor knew I how to regain either. But my severity appeared as necessary as that of a surgeon, who must try the depth of the wound which he is anxious to heal. While she flattered herself the partiality by which her conduct was influenced was unknown, that might seem to herself beyond the reach of censure. I struggled to draw her towards my bosom.—"These bitter tears, my sweet young friend, and your disorder of mind, deeply affect me. I am incapable of giving you one unnecessary pang. I truly, fondly love you. Your fault is that of innocence only, and therefore more dangerous. Love is, in itself,

no crime; though circumstances may make it so. Yours, my Amelia, is too artless to escape Mr. Monro's observation."

She spoke not a word, but lifted up her hands and eyes with a gesture more expressive of terror than words could have been. I resumed—

"Ah, my dear, that gentleman knows the world too well, and you know it too little, for him to be mistaken when so deeply interested! Now call up your resolution to survey a side of the picture which you have not even fancied. Mr. Monro is inclined to gallantry. I have reason to be certain that he is so; and you might well awaken this dangerous inclination in a man of nicer principles. It is plain that he insinuates himself into your confidence without uttering one word which might alarm your fears: he has easily discovered his influence over you, by your giving such implicit attention to his schemes; but can the man indeed mean you well, who persuades you to fly from her on

whom you naturally depend?—to quit the only home which nature and fortune have given you? Can he who would rob you, by one stroke, (in which take notice that he is to be an invisible agent,) of fortune, friends, name, and perhaps honour, mean you well? He leaves you no reliance on earth but himself, and has it not in his power to become your proper one. Mrs. Monro idolises her husband even, as you must acknowledge, to a folly. Far from wishing you to take this step, she, I am apt to conclude, will detest you for seeking the protection of a man who, she will too soon learn, loves you. Indeed, my dear, I cannot suppose that she has ever wished it. She could not, in such a case, have authorised the indelicacy of his making the proposal; nor would she meanly have sought to appear ignorant of what she must, at least, have understood. This dangerous, this artful project has nothing feminine in it; and is rather Mr. Monro's own."

"Oh, if so, how should I hate him!"

"Indeed! Think it so, then, my sweet girl, for your own sake. I have yet considered only what you would lose: now let us see what he would gain by thus reducing you to an abject dependence on himself. Alas! might he not soon tax your gratitude for a recompense beyond the value of any obligation? perhaps, too, at the very moment when Lady Austin's resentment shall bestow on him the whole fortune in which she certainly means, at present, you should be a sharer!"

"Oh, no, he cannot be such a monster!"

"My love for you may make me too severe in my judgement."

I thought, as her apostrophe has served every girl in love from the creation to the present hour, that it was wiser to appear to give it weight, than render myself odious by treating it with ridicule or contempt, and therefore passed on to more important considerations.

"Let us now take into view what the advantages are which you would gain by

giving up these:—not liberty; for you would dread appearing in the world, lest you should encounter the insults of some former haughty acquaintance:—not peace; while your life would be embittered by a passion you dared not indulge, and which would be wrought almost to madness, by the solicitations, tears, and threats, of that presuming lover, against whom you could then no more shut your door than your heart. What torture must such a life be! Nay, should he, either from remorse or weariness, give up the pursuit, the world, the cruel world, will allow him full credit for success. But how, if once in such a situation, can you resist? Never wrote poet more justly than Otway, who says—

'And if you yield he certainly forsakes you.'

"Withdraw, then, your fancy from the images with which love and Monro have filled it, and contemplate those which prudence now presents to you. Ah, what are your present sufferings, unembittered by self-reproach, to those you must then

endure in loneliness, jealousy, remorse! Nor will you, perhaps, be spared the bitter aggravation of poverty. Lady Austin is not young; her infirmities will not allow her to live long; a few weeks, months, or, at most, years, will put you in possession of all that you can wish, without leaving any one a right to tyrannise over you: but the tyranny of a guilty conscience will embitter your whole life, and give a thousand horrors to the hour when you must resign it. Oh, my interesting, innocent Amelia! my very soul bleeds over you. Let me have the relief of hoping that I may, hereafter, see you the wife of a lover more deserving; and of secretly saying that it was my attachment to Miss Fermor, and her confidence in me, which assured to her this peaceful lot, this shining fortune."

Had you seen the flood of tears which a combination of ideas arising from her fate and my own drew from my eyes, you would rather have thought me the admonished than the admonisher.

"Oh, never, never will you see me either a wife, or happy!" cried she inarticulately. "But though I cannot avoid misery, I may guilt.—When shall I get this horrid picture from my mind!"

A thousand vehement assurances which she gave me rather heightened than extinguished my fears, by proving the excess of that passion which thus wrought up her feelings. The very promises I obtained from her sprang, obviously, more from love than reason. I now lamented having no longer the power of supporting my advice by my presence; yet, when I recollected the danger to myself of her erring while under my care, I hardly could regret thus suddenly giving up my employment.

Pale and miserable enough we both looked, after our sleepless night. Our parting embraces renewed our tears.—"Thou, O God, who canst humble the strong, and raise up the weak, be this sweet girl's support!" cried I with fervour.—"Give her fortitude beyond her years in

the cause of virtue, and such a recompense as virtue merits!"

The scene yet lives before me, and almost supercedes my own misfortunes. I, though miserable enough, knew where to find a friend, whose open arms would joyfully enclose me, and from whose heart mine might still catch warmth. Amelia Fermor, made up of beauty, innocence, and sensibility, born to consequence, perhaps title, had not one real comforter to fly to.

I was obliged to send (by the post) a letter, yesterday, to my Lord, charging him to write no more till he hears from me. Had I not done so, Lady Austin would perhaps have got his letter of to-day.

I perceive, with infinite vexation, that I have lost the warm good-will of the Forrestess: the peculiarity of my ties and feelings makes it impossible that I should account to them for my short stay in each family I have been with. I am obliged to understand that they think me an ill-

tempered, capricious girl, who cannot endure the inevitable compliances of a subordinate situation.—This is among my many, many trials!

Should Lord Westbury apply to you, I charge you know nothing of me at present; he is only your patron—I am your friend;—there is no competition in the claims.

I am almost tempted to seek a situation in some other country.—To live in the place with him whom I love, and constantly to deny myself the least indulgence,—it is more than humanity dare promise: and, oh, if I once relax he will know all his power! Ah, sweet Amelia Fermor, what efficacy would my opinion, perhaps, have with you, did you know how exactly my own conduct is governed by it!—But I will have courage as well as patience; the two most essential virtues, and far the most difficult ones, to your

Cecilia Rivers.

LETTER LII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

"WRITE what you will, so you do but write." Ah, no, my dear! those complaints against fortune, which fill up this melancholy chasm in my life, would weary you, were I to repeat them,—perhaps would disgrace myself. Alone in the busy world, nothing interests, nothing engages me—Lord Westbury only.—Yes, dear but idle dreams form the little pleasure of my solitary days. But, however interesting to myself these waking illusions may become, I am quite sensible that they cannot have the same charms for you.

Why, Amelia, will you be so quick-sighted? I shall allow you to enter only into those feelings which I communicate; not to follow my heart through all it conceals. Yes, it is too true that I some-

times call back time; fancy myself the companion of his childhood; talk with him, sing with him, hear him. Ah, had *my* father been the man chosen to educate Lord Westbury, what had been my fate? Alas, perhaps too happy! I might, like his wife, have ere this known the misery of outliving his affection; for I fear that love is as often extinguished by over care as neglect; and, whatever my fate is hereafter to prove, I think that I can never know a worse. My heart sinks hourly at the thought of his forgetting me. How should an obscure young creature, dependent and wandering, hope forever to attach a man who is embosomed among the pleasures, and in the habit, of self-indulgence? Oh, let me turn from the fearful apprehension!—"that way madness lies!" Yet would a heart so licentious be worth a serious regret? Alas! the value of every human good is perhaps chimerical; and if I fancy the heart of Lord Westbury to be my only treasure, a monarch, in having

his diadem torn from him, could lose no more.

Thinking ever of me when you write, you give me no news of yourself, your family, your new home, or the society it affords you. Do you ever go to Arlington?—"Write what *you* will, so *you* do but write." I repeat your own words, but with much more propriety. Your days cannot have the vacant uniformity of mine. Your delight in your children, the little cares of your house, the tender attentions necessary towards your husband, together with those hours you both steal from your own happiness, do bestow on the afflictions of others—all these supply that busy variety which makes the present hours delightful; and the recollection of the past a comfort.

Your life is filled up with love, with friendship, innocence, and peace.—What, then, is mine? Ah! I reprove myself at once, my dear, for the unconscious meanness of enumerating your enjoyments

but to aggravate the wants of my heart. Oh, no! continue to describe, with your usual beautiful simplicity, every domestic scene, assured that nothing which interests you can be indifferent to me.

I have not the claims to felicity which she may fairly make, who has always been an example of propriety; whose tenderness was guided by duty, and is hallowed by matrimony; who, with true dignity, has bounded her wishes to her fortune; and, in the improvement of that, only obtained a power of extending those generous wishes.

Write me all, then, my Amelia; and let me find a resource in your enjoyments against the languor of wanting such, and being without a taste for any other.

LETTER LIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Twickenham.

AN unexpected recommendation has relieved me from the weight of my own thoughts, and given me a chance of improving my impaired health, at the beautiful retreat of General Vere. It is almost a terrestrial paradise; the gardens slope down to the Thames' side, in velvet verdure; and are, though not large, laid out exquisitely. That translucent river spreads to a noble breadth here, and a family of swans and cygnets people the sedge opposite; while the tall trees of Ham Walks enrich the scene. Further on rises Richmond Hill—

> "Shade above shade, a woody theatre
> Of stateliest view; which to the heart inspires
> Vernal delight and joy, able to chase
> All sadness but despair."

And these sweet scenes do indeed revive in my soul some of those cheerful feelings which time, solitude, confinement, love, and grief, had well nigh extinguished. I was always fond of the country; and this is a chosen spot. The seats, gardens, nay, the very woods and fields appear to have been arranged with a reference to general as well as appropriate beauty and convenience, insomuch that selfishness seems lost in philanthropy.

Miss Vere is a great walker; and, cold as it is, whenever the weather favours, we stroll about for hours: nor are we singular; since this is among the few places, in the neighbourhood of London, where a fine lady may use her legs without shocking her acquaintance. We often meet parties of belles and beaux; the latter of whom always either please or displease me, as I find them more or less like Lord Westbury: yet so wholly does he occupy my mind, that, as my favourite song says—

"Every face that I see has his air;
Every sound that I hear is his voice."

Apropos—I am rapidly improving on the harp. It is an elegant instrument, and Miss Vere plays prettily. Her master is capital; and, finding me already a musician, takes some pains to render me a proficient. You see, that, occupied as my heart is, I still endeavour to cultivate my talent. It is, I hope, only a vulgar observation, that ladies, however fond of music before marriage, generally renounce it afterwards. For my own part, I am persuaded that I could as soon forget my husband as my harpsichord—and that chiefly because I was a wife—for I should be as anxious to amuse his fancy as to touch his heart. It is astonishing how many married women, who do not cease to be good, cease to be agreeable. Busy, uniform, exact in the discharge of every duty, they forget that pleasure is a volatile charm, and springs chiefly from trifles. What, but the love of variety, renders so many good wives deserted for faithless mistresses? Surely the woman, then, is to blame, who abates nothing of her con-

sequence to secure her happiness. Too indolent to keep alive passion, yet too affectionate to be content with esteem, how many of our sex spend their lives in arraigning the fate they have made for themselves! It is true, that, in all important points, the heart will follow, and be governed by, its own feelings: nor would conformity be then a merit; but in trifles it often is amiable. How flattering must it be to the man of your choice to feel himself the second principle of your existence!—to know that his taste guides yours in books, dress, and amusements! Complaisance of this kind touches at once the heart and the vanity so delicately, that it is never lost.

A noble conduct in the great trials of life excites esteem, delight, admiration; but is without any referential merit, as it must ever be the exertion of natural character. Virtue will perhaps assume too dignified a mien, if unaccompanied by the graces; and never can that charm, like the unassuming sweetness which, without as-

serting a single claim, seems only a delightful reflexion of the heart beloved. Tenderness often springs from mere trifles: it is, perhaps, longest sustained by them. This mode of exciting interest is almost peculiar to our sex; yet great is the recompense it insures. There is a consciousness of superiority in the most equitable men; allow that, and they will grant you every thing. Perhaps, in the very act of yielding, you obtain an advantage which they would, otherwise, constantly contest with you: for I have frequently observed, that in minds not ungenerously turned, if one could resolve to give up a single point in an argument, the other yielded all.

How insolent is this in me, who am only looking over the game in which you take so active a part! Would one not think I rather supposed that I was writing to the world than an individual?

I know how you will be pleased to see my character recover, though only in a slight degree, its natural tone.

I shall reserve a further account of the family I am with, for a future letter.

Yours, &c.

CECILIA RIVERS.

LETTER LIV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

YES, my dear! you *shall* have the promised sketch of this family; and a curious one you will find it. With whom shall I begin? Oh! Madame la Maîtresse, without doubt! General Vere's Lady is, then, between forty and fifty; affects a handsome gravity, and a frigid complaisance. She appears to have renounced the world, and become a devotee: yet there is an ostentation in her piety, and a method in her faults, to which people less uniform cannot reconcile themselves. Attentive, to preciseness, to her church duties; surrounded now by devout clergymen, and now by objects of compassion,

goodness seems to be the only business of Mrs. Vere's life: but I am much mistaken if she would pardon your forgetting to think it so. Card-playing on a Sunday is her horror, as well as mine; yet I hardly think the time better spent in arraigning our thoughtless neighbours; while conscious that a shrug from her is mortal to a reputation, and a word leaves a man without a character. Nor does she appear to me to be sparing of either.

The general is a gouty veteran, who, perhaps, was once a good soldier; and now lives upon the credit of his past actions. He fights over one battle or other, and sometimes all, every day; and constantly expects the same expression of astonishment at manœuvres which we now know as well as himself. I really believe that he has repeated his bombastic account of his exploits till he thinks it true: and one doubtful glance is a mortal offence in his eyes. Let any other subject than a military one occur, and he is kind, open, and unsuspecting, as an infant.

The most important affairs pass him without attention; of course, devolve on his lady, who is alive enough to employment of that kind. He is sufficiently liberal to all who study his humour, and a hearty friend to the bottle. For his wife he entertains so profound a respect, that he leaves to her all care of himself and fortune; and for his daughter has so fond an indulgence, that from his lips she never hears a denial. That young lady is the most difficult to be understood of the three. Though only fourteen, she is sullen, cool, and shrewd, in her temper; indolent in all that relates to her education; yet tinctured with a piety so rigid, that it almost amounts to bigotry. Her faults are positive; her virtues, on the contrary, negative: yet she already knows how to manage both her parents, and will do only whatever happens to please herself.

I have now learnt enough of the world to follow its lead where I innocently may, and, by complaisance, avoid offending. To avow sentiments contrary to my own,

where my opinion is demanded, would be an unworthy dissimulation; but to declare my whole heart, unasked, as erroneous a sincerity. In a word, silence is often an advantage to us, and seldom an injury; for, though it is very difficult to add to our friends, it is easy to avoid increasing our enemies; which is certainly the second advantage.

A prudence so guarded, of course extends only to my general connexions; for, when I speak of the soul, mine is in my eyes: I would, in vain, suppress the dangerous sincerity. Love and friendship, those sacred bonds of society, rise to my sight in the persons of Lord Westbury and my Amelia; who are so truly the inhabitants of my heart, that they ever throw some of its warmth into my words. Even as I write I feel the exquisite emotion. The very repetition of those names diffuses through my frame that tremulous sensation which reason and nature combine in forming; that soul-expanding softness, which is in its delicacy the first

charm in this life, while its elevation proves our pretensions to a better.

Although not so wholly excluded from society here as at Lady Austin's, I do not find it easy to blend with either of two sets who frequent General Vere's table. The subalterns whom he once commanded, find it, perhaps, necessary to obtain, by a devoted respect and the talent of eternally listening, a hearty welcome and a doubtful patronage. These, however, I pity, though I do not esteem. But what shall I say of the full-blown priestly pride of Mrs. Vere's friends? The clergy who surround her, have the courage to exact an attention which the hardy veterans deign to sue for. Oh, my dear! it is now only I know in what a strange way men of letters and merit sometimes disgrace their holy profession. I have been told that censoriousness is the characteristic of old maids; but, believe me, they have no exclusive claim to the odious failing. Did you listen but one hour to the tales which half of Mrs. Vere's pious friends

repeat about each other, you would agree in opinion with me. These, with laboured oblique panegyrics on themselves, tedious disquisitions on livings, complaints of those they possess, and wishes for those they expect, make up almost the whole of their conversation. The profound attention of Mrs. Vere causes her to be considered by her own set as little less than a saint: but, alas! how far are they from being entitled to confer that distinction; and how low, how very low, does she stoop to obtain it! You know too well my reverence for a function which my father filled with such propriety, and your husband ornaments, to suppose that I would say what is not a fact: but indeed, my dear, this is no amplification. And what added to my disgust was, that not one of these irreverend divines was either poor or unprovided for: not one of them wanted knowledge to give dignity to the doctrines which they have undertaken to inculcate; and could they individually conquer the littleness of self-love, each might

become a worthy servant to Him "through whom alone they can see salvation."

What will you think, when I tell you I am already apprehensive that the pleasant situation I am in will not be permanent? It is almost absurd to inform you why. But I was born to be the wretch of feelings too refined for my condition: could I reduce mine to the level of those who surround me, what anxious hours might I escape!

There is in General Vere's family a young man of the name of Birch, who, without any decided rank or employment, seems to be all in all with every body. I have been told, that in his boyish days he was a private soldier in the General's regiment; and, having had the good fortune to bring him when wounded off the field of battle, has ever after continued about him. It is certain, the plea of bad health obtained Mr. Birch his discharge when General Vere quitted the service; and it is likewise certain, that he not only enjoys very good health, but a vulgar glowing

kind of beauty, with a most dauntless assurance. I had not been a week here when he took it into his head to pretend that he had fallen in love with me. As he, and all below him, think this a condescension on his part, every domestic favours Birch's gallantries; and if I am unlucky enough to meet with him either in the house or garden, we are alone in an instant. Imagine how pleasant his illiterate compliments and coarse gallantry must be. I am not naturally haughty nor severe, and have told him over and over, that I have not a heart to dispose of; nor, if I had, should perhaps bestow it on him. He, however, is not to be repulsed; but, persuaded that a bold and persevering lover will sooner or later succeed, he grasps my poor hands, notwithstanding all resistance, and sometimes makes advances to greater familiarity.

Why was I born, why was I bred with so high a sense of delicacy and propriety? My heart swells with indignation at the vulgar importunity of one, in mind so

wholly beneath me. Is this a rival—alas! that word sharpens another thorn rankling in my heart. Never since I left Lady Austin's, have I seen or heard of Lord Westbury. You will tell me, that he only complies with my desire.—Ah! if he loved as I do, vain were all such desires: I could have traced him to the verge of the globe. This cold, this exact obedience offends and grieves me. Perhaps he already looks back with astonishment on those hours when he swore eternal faith, with an ardour so affecting—perhaps, already relapsed.—Alas, my dear! pity, rather than blame, the excesses of a soul too tender for its peace, and pardon a mean jealousy which punishes itself.

I am concerned to find that you have no agreeable society in your new residence. To you, who now first quit all your early connexions, this must be peculiarly displeasing. *I* severely sympathise with you, who know so well the tediousness of solitude; for solitude has

long been my hard fate in the midst of society.

How gay, how brilliant, is the colouring of childhood! No scene, however superior in real beauty, ever charms or engages you like that where the mind first expanded. Our country claims our birth: but the spot we are bred in, is the little country of the heart. Alas! that local partiality, perhaps, should be ascribed to our own inexperience. We knew not, in our early days or recollections, the cares that, to most of us, embitter knowledge; nor did the objects within, withdraw our attention from those without.

This justly celebrated spot delights not me like those wild walks round Winchester, where we have so often rambled while settling the important point of what caps we should adorn our dolls with, or what ourselves. Nor has fancy, assisted by expense, ever formed a vista so pleasing to my taste, as that from the great door of the cathedral across the church-

yard. How often have I seen the Gothic gates thrown open, and, through the long perspective, heard the organ sound; while my thoughtful eye, on either hand, surveyed new-made graves and mouldering tomb-stones!

"Sad luxury, to vulgar minds unknown."

I can easily suppose that imagination, which ever magnifies, has strengthened the impression on my mind: and were I now to revisit the spot, I might find little to admire; for with this idea recurs that of her who knows so well how to give charms to every scene. We shot up there together, my Amelia! and, imbibing from affection the characters of each other, our minds, manners, nay features, and style of dress, assumed a similitude.

These recollections cannot fail to interest you, since they present the husband of your heart as a young collegian. I have not forgotten your blue ribbons, while meditating this fortunate conquest; nor yet the little feeling you both had for

me, when our walks were so unmercifully prolonged. I have an excellent memory for the pleasures of life, and perhaps too quick a one for its evils. Oh, Lord Westbury! under which head must I class you, who now seem to unite both?

LETTER LV.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

HOW mortifying is it that we cannot place the benefits which the great are pleased now and then to confer, to the account of generosity! That godlike quality seems mostly to fix her residence in the hearts that can feel, but not diffuse, her influence: while pride, ambition, ostentation, by turns assume her name, and are permitted to bear it. Mankind, doubly unjust, take pleasure first in cancelling obligation by their conduct, and then in charging those whom they have served with doing it.

The rage for distinction that seems, in this age, to infect the whole world, must be astonishing to the rational few. Each individual is, by some fancied merit, exalted in self-opinion above the circle he lives in: each studies how to deliver down with *éclat* to posterity, a name which must, while the owner yet exists, be confined to his own set; and, when he dies, will probably only be found on that terrible memento of human vanity and infirmity, a tomb-stone. Incomprehensible weakness! which would almost persuade us that we are surrounded by beings, who expect in death annihilation, not judgement and reward; and therefore seek to establish in this world a poor self-erected reputation. Yet while I am thus severe, dare I conclude my own censorious heart to be free from the foible I call universal? Ah, no: Lord Westbury and Mrs. Forrester form my little world, and for their admiration I labour as indefatigably as Mrs. Granville for that of the age. "But who," methinks you cry, "is this

high-minded lady?" Softly, my dear! you shall hear in due time.

It is, however, certain that I have already left General Vere's; but you will soon learn, that I was hardly a party concerned in my own dismission.

A few days after I last wrote, Miss Vere's total negligence of her duty to herself, made it absolutely necessary that I should find fault with her. I saw the little dignity of the little lady took fire; and, as soon as she well could, she left the music-room, where she and I usually sit in the forenoon. Knowing her will to be almost the law of the family, I did not check or follow her: but she could scarcely be up the stairs, when in bolted that impertinent Birch, whom I mentioned in my last. He persecuted me with his "sufferings for my sake;" was more prolix, more vehement, more insupportable than ever. I once again repeated what I had told him fifty times at least, and rose to quit the room. The odious wretch griped my poor hand so hard, that I was

not able to wrest it from him; and, what induced the insolence I know not, he suddenly encircled me in his arms, and passionately kissed me. Even indignation and aversion were not strong enough to release me; and had not the foot of some one at the garden-door surprised him, I know not how I should have got away. I perceived Mrs. Vere there, who stood, as it were, root-bound with surprise and anger. I courtesied, as being glad to see her; but my face was crimson, I believe, alike with the struggle and disgust. The wretch remained, to appearance, petrified; while this cold austere matron cast *such* looks on him. It is not possible that any provocation could produce such from me. It became necessary for her, however, to conquer her feeling; and she passed silently through the room, as if she would not interrupt our *tête-à-tête;* yet at the door threw another bitter glance on the culprit, which I did not fail to second as I followed her.

This incident taught me a lesson which

I might sooner have learnt, had not my own sense of propriety checked the idea. A hypocrite towards God, may well be one towards man; and certainly Mrs. Vere is very ostentatious and superficial in her devotions. Yet, as she might have quite as much to fear from me, as I could from her, I was doubtful whether she would venture to asperse me.—A singular chance alone could have informed me how she meant to manage my dismission.

The General's niece, Mrs. Granville, has been a week here on a visit; to accommodate whom, Miss Vere and I had been obliged to quit our usual apartment, and lodge in a smaller one close to Mrs. Vere's dressing-room. I rather think that the lady, in her wrath, had forgotten this change. Thither, however, I retired; though perhaps she concluded my anger to be only assumed, and that I returned to her favourite, in the music-room. The day was uncommonly warm, and I sat down at an open window. Mrs. Vere's

sashes were, I found, likewise open; and the least sound might be heard from one chamber to the other. I guessed that she was looking over her wardrobe, by the many drawers which she pulled in and out. At last she spoke to my pupil.

"What is the matter, my dear?—are you not well?"

"La, mamma! how should one be well, teased out of one's life so? What with my French, my work, my arithmetic, and my geography, my new governess leads me a worse life than my old one."

"Yes: I fancy this young woman is ill-tempered enough, and I rather think she is artful. An artful person I ever detested. But my pet knows how to wind her papa round her finger: why does she not tell him?"

"Ay; but, mamma, I may get a worse, for aught I know! You say they are all ignorant or troublesome."

"Nay, my sweet! what signifies complaining, if, after all, you can endure her

better than any body else?—How does my Hetty like this gown?"

"Oh, mamma! it is monstrous pretty, indeed! Silver muslin is surely the sweetest dress. I wonder you never wear it, mamma?"

"*I* wear it, my dear! I am turned of thirty, (the good lady might have safely added ten more years to her age!) and such gay clothes no longer are proper for me. People who do not know me, might say that I was vain; and, God knows, my vanity is small, very small indeed. Your poor papa never minds now what gown I have on. But, as we were saying, I am afraid your governess lays traps for the servants. Did you never observe?"

"O yes, I took notice that she is always mighty complaisant, with her 'pray John's,' and 'if you please James,' when she wants but the least thing in the world done."

"Nay, my dear, that is quite right in her station. It is not that I mean;

but I fear she allows them liberties. Did you ever see her at romps among them?"

"Oh, gracious, no! I wish I had."

"Fie, fie, my dear!"

"Then, you know, I should have had a secret of hers in my keeping; and I would have led her such a life!"

"Did you never see her flirting with Birch, then?"

"Why she hates him worse than poison!"

"Ah, poor child! she told you so, I suppose. It is easy enough to impose on such an innocent. God forbid, that I should judge her uncharitably! I could never make her amends, or forgive myself the sin. But I must say that I think her ways a shocking example for a young lady of your age and fortune. She tells you that she hates Birch; yet I catch her giggling in his arms."

"Mercy, mamma! what, Miss Rivers?"

"Yes, my dear! your governess. The man was absolutely devouring her with

kisses, and in the public teaching-room. However, I never opened my lips: the best of us are born to err, Hetty; and it is our duty to pardon, rather than punish; so do not repeat what I have told you, to any one. It may hurt her character; but, you know, one cannot keep such a dissembling minx. I think you might conscientiously complain to your papa of her temper:—ay, put it all on that footing. I saw him hobble towards the green-house just now, in an excellent humour. Go, my darling! catch him there: a tear of yours does so manage the dear old man. And if you should meet John, bid him run the while to fetch the mantua-maker. This silver muslin will make my Hetty a pretty summer dress; and her mamma will give it, with all her heart."

Ah, poor Cecilia! sighed I, thou art expelled at once!—for what girl was ever proof against a bribe so tempting? I heard Mrs. Vere's room-door shut, and amused myself with thinking what next

would become of me. Previous to dinner, General Vere desired my company in his study; at the lower end of which sat his lady, at work on a carpet, with the devout and mortified air of a nun. The General, who never makes long harangues, abruptly informed me, that "his daughter could not submit to a temper so intractable as mine; and that he was resolved Hetty should never be made unhappy about her learning: so he had no further occasion for my services." I only observed, that, "if the objection was of so slight a nature, I flattered myself Mrs. Vere would, when applied to, do justice to my conduct." She stiffly bowed, and I made my exit:—happy in a conscious superiority over a woman of whom it would be madness to complain. Could I even prove what I only conjecture, it would be barbarous in me to deprive her husband of the confidence in her conduct which now makes both happy. To be agreeably deceived is, we are told, the grand secret of life. If so, General Vere may pass the

rest of his in perfect security, for your Cecilia.

I had not clearly understood from the General, whether I was expected to leave the house that afternoon; and ventured to enter Mrs. Vere's dressing-room to inform myself. The choice that lady left me was made no choice, by the ungracious manner; and Mrs. Granville, who was present, on finding that I was determined to go immediately, offered to convey me in her carriage. My acceptance of this polite offer was little to Mrs. Vere's satisfaction; but she dared not oppose it.

Mrs. Granville's character is, by a singularity in her education, so strangely compounded, that every body likes her except the few to whom she is intimately known. Her father, who once headed the cabinet, had only this child; and being early left a widower, indulged her to a folly. It was soon discovered, that he never denied a petition to his daughter, and through her all his dependents

assailed him; while, to win her interest, they daily offered the most gross and perpetual adulation. She is naturally lovely and amiable; nor would her advantages ever be questioned, did she not arrogate to herself more than she really possesses. Mr. Granville thought all his views accomplished, when he married the minister's only child; and, indeed, as long as her father lived, her influence lasted. With him, however, it expired: but the pride of patronage had forever infected her manners. She perpetually showed her husband that she expected homage, and could not condescend to the retired duties of a wife: he therefore soon sought a more complying disposition in those whom he could purchase. Her friends, wearied with the superiority she affected towards them, and lofty offers of service when her power was lost, gradually grew disgusted, and withdrew. Thus within a few years, with an excellent heart and understanding, Mrs. Granville became generally ridiculed and disliked. Her

husband made many efforts to correct the foible of her nature; but these only changed indifference, on both sides, into aversion. Their friends interfered; and two years since they parted in form. Mrs. Granville's moral character is perfectly unsullied: she mixes little in general society, but is surrounded with a train of humble cousins, and mean dependents; who, by flattering her foible, prey upon her fortune. Overlook that foible, and few women are so engaging: but she *will* be the only object whenever she appears.

When I was seated in Mrs. Granville's coach, and she began with great affability to converse with me, I was astonished at her singularity. Finding that I had been sent away by a girlish whim of Miss Vere's, (for I dared not own any other cause) she assured me, with a mixture of dignity and kindness, that "I need not be at all uneasy, for she liked me, and would take me under her protection." I so far accepted this princely kind of patronage, as to request her in-

terest to introduce me into some family of consideration: but she was resolved to act up to her declaration, and carried me home with her, much to the dissatisfaction of some dependent cousins whom I found in possession there. The natural expression of my gratitude was warm enough to flatter Mrs. Granville's foible, and she soon began discussing General Vere and his family very freely with me. Mrs. Vere is too stiff and decided a character to please her, and my pupil too unformed. On learning how I came to quit them, she politely assured me, that the loss would be, as it ought, theirs

Two days so improved our acquaintance, that she pressed me to reside with her as a companion: but this I declined (plainly perceiving the implicit deference which she requires); with an assurance, that I rather chose to tax my time and talents, than enjoy a dependent affluence. This opinion did not meet her approbation, but was extolled to the skies by two servile relations, who practise the very reverse.

How, indeed, can you resolve to owe every thing to a being superior to yourself, perhaps only in having something to bestow? To become a companion, as that kind of non-existence is called, is literally to make yourself a cipher in creation. It is to contract a habit of dress and idleness never to be conquered, although a thousand caprices may expose you to return to poverty and industry. It is to be placed perhaps to doze out half your life at a card-table, if the party is incomplete, without any power of excusing yourself; and either to go abroad or stay at home, solely as the whim of your patroness directs. It is to dress, to walk, to talk, almost to think, as she pleases; happy, indeed, if you can do the latter, as that sweetens the bondage. In a word, it is the worst kind of servitude; because it comprehends every inconvenience of that state, without its only advantages, the right of demanding wages, or the power of giving warning. Gratitude is a feeling so delicate, that it will not

bear the smallest claim upon it; and, indeed, the more we feel, the less can we ever express.

If, exhausted at last, the companion ventures to remonstrate, the merit of years of endurance is lost, perhaps, at once; and a reproach which is just is hardly ever pardoned. Such is the fate of that melancholy appendage to a fine lady—her pensioned companion.

In Mrs. Granville's family, such a situation would be more than commonly odious. It is to be, in addition to all that I have described, subjected to the envy and impertinence of those to whom she is an amiable dupe; and silenced, alike, because you would scorn to retaliate, and might fail to open her eyes.

As a temporary asylum, Mrs. Granville's house is a great convenience; and, to own the truth, a necessary one: for, alas! to be wholly sincere, your poor Cecilia is poor enough, literally.

* * * * * * *

I hoped before I finished this that something might occur to give it a pleasanter termination; and have just learned from Mrs. Granville, that she has had a letter from her cousin the Duchess of Kingsbury, to inquire for a governess; but she will not accept any one who has not lived in some family of distinction. I was therefore obliged to name Lady Westbury, to whom Mrs. Granville has written. My Lord will not, if he hears of the inquiry, gain much intelligence, as the Duchess never brings the young family from the seat near Scarborough. My natural taste for the country would lead me to rejoice at this prospect of seclusion, but that my heart will ever hover near its possessor. Though as much banished from his sight as if in the Indies, it is always some pride and comfort to me to recollect, that I might see him if I would; and this, perhaps, alone gives me resolution to forbear it. Yet I ought to be contented. Ah! if conviction could

make us so, it would be a happiness indeed. Otherwise,

> "It only points the secret spear,
> Of many a nameless woe."

Adieu!

P. S. On recollecting what I have said of my poverty, I fear lest you should impute to me some kind of extravagance; for you have not lived in this great town, where want and misery press continually upon the heart unseared by self-love and luxury; and how can the hand then be closed?

LETTER LVI.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Broome Wyndham.

MY journey to this old mansion was not unpleasant, though tedious. I slept last night at Scarborough, where I could have been well pleased to spend the day;

so much did the wild charm of its sea-beat environs agree with the turn of my mind. This morning the Duchess, however, sent over her carriage for me, and I had the honour of presenting her a letter from Mrs. Granville, enclosing one from Lady Westbury. A coronet on the envelope procured me as tolerable a reception as a lady of most forbidding manners ever gives to a person beneath her. Yet those harsh features are not without beauty. In truth, the Duchess is much handsomer now than Lady Betty Angus, her daughter, who took me by surprise, in being almost as big again as myself. The inevitable growth of a daughter must sufficiently mortify a mother yet alive to admiration. A most unformed carriage, and blushing reserve, show the young lady to be very unfit for that world into which she soon must enter: not, however, I can already perceive, till it is no longer possible to seclude her. Lady Betty was for many years the only child of the Duke. Two more girls have since been

added to the family; but as the youngest of these is five years of age, the father no longer hopes for a male heir, and the three daughters will one day divide an immense property.

What I have said of my pupil, will not prepossess you in her favour; but I shall counteract your prejudice, when I tell you that she acquiesces, apparently without a murmur, in her mother's will, and almost lives in the apartments of the children. At least, so the nursery-maids tell me.

* * * * * * *

I thought it hardly worth while to send this epistle away, till I could either give you further intelligence of myself or the family I am with; but Lady Betty is so constantly my companion, that had not her mother taken her this morning to the Nursery, as they call a lodge which is four miles off, I should have found it hard to steal a moment of loneliness.

In seeking for some pens in the writing-desk, I laid my hand on Lady

Westbury's letter of recommendation. As Mrs. Granville had too much politeness to show me an epistle of which I was the subject, I was as yet in ignorance of its contents, and felt a kind of right to know them. Oh, Amelia! of what caprices are we not the slaves when we love! While I perused a warm and liberal account of myself, though penned in a school-girl's hand, and abounding with grammatical and orthographical errors, instead of feeling obliged by the kindness, I burst into tears, and wept, bitterly wept, over the injustice of fortune, which gave to the wife of Lord Westbury a right to patronise me. Although my present situation depended on that letter, methought I could rather have borne the utmost malevolence of the world, than owed any thing to Lady Westbury. Alas, my friend! how is my little pride made daily less! Shall I, then, at length sink to the common level of life, insensible of the delicacies which have hitherto formed my happiness? Ah, no! my wounded heart disdains the

thought. When shall I be able to forgive Lady Westbury this painful obligation! Yet, perhaps, I may not owe it to herself: my Lord might see Mrs. Granville's letter, and dictate—Alas! I grow very, very, narrow-hearted! Why should I wish to take a merit from her character, to add it to that of a man who, perhaps, already immersed in a variety of pursuits, recollects no longer the breaking heart which he took such pains to win!

I am in a mighty detestable humour this morning; one of those fearing, doubting, hoping moods, which, floating through the vast vicissitude of possibilities, dwells only on those that are mortifying and affecting. Methinks you cry, "Is this the sister of my heart, Cecilia Rivers? my own Cecilia? She who was once the very harbinger of cheerfulness, and who bore even misfortune with calmness?" Alas, my dear! I knew not then what it was, "to look into happiness through another's eyes:" to see another tread carelessly on the jewel which you have sought through

life, and discover, without any power to appropriate. Ah! did Lady Westbury set an equal value on that invaluable heart; did she employ her days in rendering his happy, I should have no right to complain: but when she supplies her husband only a solitary home, "loveless, joyless, unendeared;" or rather, when she drives him into loose pursuits and transient pleasures — there, there is my affliction! She disdains him whom I dare not console, dare not make happy; though my heart knows no other wish, nor asks another power. The world, the false, the captivating world, may snatch him from me. He may fancy himself as truly, as eminently beloved, by some more artful woman: for although to feign a passion well, we must have felt it; after once feeling it, how easy is the deception!

Oh, Amelia! while tumultuous thoughts like these chase each other from my mind, what days, what nights must I pass! I will write again, whenever I can resolve to

be silent on this subject. It is a resolve which I make and break every time I take up the pen. Adieu!

LETTER LVII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Scarborough.

HAD ever poor young creature yet so perpetual a train of ill-luck! I really believe, that my only asylum will be the grave. Yet even these petty disappointments and evils may, in the great scale, have their use, by preserving my mind from that inactive state, which is more dangerous to our moral feelings than these painful exertions. Fain would I give my thoughts this turn, and not first question Providence in my own case. Let me, then, summon resolution to rise above my fortune; and if "a brave mind, struggling with the storms of fate," can be worthy the care of the Almighty, let me en-

deavour to deserve the agonising distinction.

To be undone by integrity, is too grievous. Could I once resolve to become blind, artful, and compliant; in short, could I offend God to temporise with his creatures, I might lead at least an indolent life. Yet justly says the poet,

> "The mind to virtue train'd, in ev'ry state
> Rejoicing, grieving, dying, must possess
> Th' exalted pleasure to exert that virtue!"

No disappointment can extinguish in our souls a consciousness so angelic; no rewards over-rule it. It consecrates every suffering it occasions, by elevating us in our own eyes, in proportion as worldly distinctions are withdrawn from us. By depriving us of all other support, it may be justly thought to bring us nearer to God; and therefore, perhaps, are the children of misfortune said peculiarly to be his. You see how I try to contend with my fate: yet, oh, my dear! there are moments when an embittered spirit almost starts

into phrensy; there are others, when it flows away in tears.

In this family I thought that I need only reconcile myself to an irksome obscure situation, which had all the appearance of being permanent; for I had but one young lady to form—old enough, it is true, to be my companion, yet docile enough to submit to become my pupil. I found no other inconvenience than that I formerly mentioned—the impossibility of commanding any tolerable portion of leisure to write or read: which produced, in a mind impassioned and uneasy as mine must be, a restlessness and irritation which affected my temperament, and the silence of which you so heavily complain.

During the three months that have elapsed since I came here, Lady Betty has never been out of the house, and rarely out of my sight. Whenever, indeed, any particular company was expected, or any party made abroad, we both were sent to the Lodge; that the

Duchess might, as I concluded, truly say, her daughter was not at home. A pleasant wild scene, and two sweet little girls, made this change not disagreeable to me: while Lady Betty amused herself, apparently, very well, in petting her little sisters. I now and then discerned a thoughtfulness in her air, which I imputed to her deep sense of her mother's selfishness, vanity, and injustice: nor did I fail to admire her prudence, in never complaining. Indeed, I studied, by every kindness and indulgence in my power, to lighten the penance imposed on her. Thus passed our days, till last week; when the Duchess having bespoke a play at Scarborough, gave all the family tickets to see it. The steward's wife pressed me much to accompany her, and I had free permission to accept the invitation, though Lady Betty was to remain at home, as she kept her chamber from indisposition. The steward's lady is a second-rate grandee here, and keeps her carriage; but, alas! it is rather of a crazy construction, and,

unluckily, broke down on that evening, about a mile from Broome Wyndham. Not choosing to walk thrice as far, for so poor a pleasure as a country play, I took leave of my companion and hastened back. Up stairs I flew to Lady Betty's dressing-room, and, throwing the door suddenly open, was little less than root-bound at perceiving the Duke's valet sitting by her, in the easy attitude of a licensed lover. On seeing me, he dropped the hand he was, till then, in possession of, and remained, as well as the young lady, motionless. As soon as I recovered voice, I desired him, haughtily enough I dare say, to withdraw. He obeyed, with a mean consciousness, which placed him yet lower in my opinion. Lady Betty leaned her arm on a table; and hiding, by that means, her face with her hand, remained covered with blushes. I sat down at some distance, resolved not to speak till collected enough to determine my own conduct. Lady Betty now and then ventured a glance at me; but, struck

by the gravity of my air, she wanted courage to utter whatever she had been studying, and her eyes dropped as though they had encountered something hateful.

I rose, at last, to retire from a scene so singular and embarrassing; when, dreading her mother's rage, poor Lady Betty conquered her diffidence, and broke the distressing silence. In a tone which witnessed, by its tremor, her sincerity, she told me, that she saw she was ruined; since a secret more dear to her than life was on the point of being published, and the fond hope of her heart sacrificed to the vanity, pride, and caprice, of her mother. With bitter sighs and tears, she conjured me to pity her cruel situation, and forbear disclosing a discovery which would ruin her, and not benefit myself. Ah, Amelia! these are the moments when the mere performance of one's duty rises to a virtue. My very soul relented at sight of that distress, which I knew myself compelled to add to. Inured to mental misery in my own person, I could

not see the storm ready to break over the head of another young creature, without sympathy. She soon perceived those tears which would accompany hers: she again entreated, again implored me; nor thought any submission humiliating. In allowing that I felt for her, I likewise was obliged to avow my resolution to be unalterable: that the trust vested in me was too sacred for the least concealment; much more, one which was of a nature to destroy the peace of a family. Yet, though obliged to disclose her error, again I repeated that I was not of a disposition to aggravate it. I doubt my voice wanted the firmness of my words, for she fell at my feet, and even with agony pleaded her mother's vanity and pride, her own want of either, the ungenerous seclusion to which she was condemned, and the ignorance in which she had been brought up; with many other palliations that have now escaped me. I gathered from circumstances, that her ill-assorted lover was nephew to her last governess, and

by her introduced into the family, probably merely to engage the young lady's affections. This discovery made my candour doubly necessary; while every moment more and more moved my heart. I know not how I should have escaped from this young unfortunate, had she not thought of silencing my integrity, by offering me a set of jewels which she had lately received from her godmother, and which, of course, were wholly her own. This gave me a disdainful feeling, that enabled me peremptorily to refuse her. Disdainful in her turn, she passed into her chamber, and there gave free vent to her sighs and tears. Having assured myself that she could not escape, I anxiously awaited the return of the Duchess from the play. She, unluckily, brought home a large party to supper: but I was too fearful of the event to delay my disclosure, and leaving a maid in the reading-room as a guard (for I doubted that the one attending Lady Betty was acquainted with the intrigue), I solicited to speak

immediately with the Duchess; who made my request remarkable, by twice sending word that I must wait her leisure. I then wrote a line, which at once brought this cruel mother to share my heart-ache.

Had you seen me in her presence, far from supposing that I was the accuser, you would have fixed on me as the culprit. My knees trembled, my cheeks were pale, and as I proceeded my voice became almost inarticulate. But, heavens! what fury gathered, while I was speaking, into the face of the Duchess! she raved, stamped, tore—in short, so terrified me, that I almost wished I had kept the secret. In vain were my palliatives humbly introduced; she dismissed me from her presence with all the *hauteur* women of quality know how to assume, and which, in this lady, is accompanied by a kind of vulgar insolence.

Here ended my share in the mortifying scene. I learnt that the Duchess, by pleading a sudden indisposition, had sent

home her company, and summoned the Duke, who had hardly power to manage her transports of passion. Lady Betty still obstinately persisted in shutting her door on me, who was the only person disposed to sooth or support her. At midnight the Duke ordered his aspiring valet to be turned out of the house, in the most ignominious manner; and by this ill-judged resentment published his own disgrace. Both parents then repaired to Lady Betty, whom they, I doubt not, treated with a severity not more wise. They staid in her chamber till four in the morning, when I saw her set out with the Duchess's woman, in the travelling chariot, escorted by the steward and two men servants; but whither, none of the family was permitted to know.

I was left to my own melancholy contemplations. Robbed, by the strictness of my principles, of an employment which I had travelled so far to obtain, I could not but wonder what was next to become of me. The children at the Nursery

had been considered as too young for my charge before; consequently would not be made so now: but the Duchess's pillow had proved a better counsellor than her rage; for she summoned me at noon the next day, and assured me that both the Duke and herself saw in my conduct much to esteem; and, to prove their sense of it, they had agreed that I should change my pupil, but still remain in the family. I had, therefore, only to pack my clothes, and adjourn to the lodge. Hinting that it would be much to my advantage to bury the past in oblivion, she presented me a piece of purple taffety, elegant enough. I did not need a bribe to do my duty; and only lamented that poor Lady Betty's secret had not been solely in my keeping. I, however, faithfully promised never to mention it; and, lest it might be thought that was the subject of my letter, I even forbore writing to you.

The Nursery is seated on a wild and pleasant hill, where I loitered out the long days with children rather calculated for

my playthings than pupils. A fortnight had thus elapsed, when I had a sudden summons to return immediately to Broome Wyndham. I understood that the servant had not been ordered to bring me a carriage, and, good walker as I am, I did not think it prudent to undertake thus to convey myself to the mansion; especially over dreary and lonely heaths. I was obliged to bribe the messenger to procure me a chaise, and wait an hour before it arrived. However, this lost time did not make me too late, for the Duchess was not up, and had desired that I would stay in the hall till she chose to speak to me. Imagine what I felt, when this message was delivered to me among a train of insolent footmen. The man who repeated it, made, by his hesitating, respectful manner, an indirect apology for the insult, which doubled its poignancy. With a consideration that his Lady had wanted, he asked if I would not like to walk in the garden, where he would come to me, when her Grace was visible. I had no choice but to take his

advice; and with a full heart, cold as I had found the morning, threw myself on a rustic seat, and wept an hour, I dare say. I was half numbed with the frost when I was summoned to the Duchess's chamber, who was still in bed; which convinced me that the cruel slight had been meditated, or she might as well have seen me when I arrived, as then. Finding, from the information of the servant, that I attended her commands—"Bid the *creature* come in," cried she in a tone which made me apprehend all that followed. The creature, however, entered, although unconscious of meriting such a term of reproach, and endeavoured to collect that mild dignity, and corrected manner, which sometimes can check even the insolence of rank. I then inquired her commands. "I have no commands for you, creature!" cried she (turning round in the bed, that she might not see your poor Cecilia's harmless face, which could only look nipped by the cold and vexation), "but to bid you quit immediately a house which

you have been too much honoured in entering." I humbly, now, entreated to know my offence. "Do you dare to catechise me?" returned she. "Ask your own ungrateful heart." I assured her that its most valuable distinction was a total innocence of the vice which she first annexed to it. "Does the insolent wretch presume to expostulate, and make speeches?" said she, half rising, and half turning to me. "Begone from my sight this moment! Go, and circulate the disgraceful tale, which you have already embellished, with the thousand lies your mean extraction will teach you to add to it, through every trumpery milliner's shop in Scarborough, full of daudles like yourself.—Not that I blame thee, creature," continued she, "so much as I do myself. I might have known that tattling was the characteristic of thy sex and situation." I took the advantage of this elegant inference in her own favour to withdraw, lest passion and vociferation should ensue; and immediately quitted the house, to apply, as di-

rected, to the steward. His lady, for such people are very tenacious of their consequence, who had formerly overwhelmed me with invitations and *politesse*, now showed a coldness that made the excuse which she was meditating unnecessary. However, from her I understood, what I had before believed, that Lady Betty's adventure had been discussed in a thousand ways, at every tea-table in the county. Nor is this wonderful, when you consider that her parents had turned out of the house an irritated lover, who, not having one inducement to silence, took a pleasure in that kind of revenge which marks the meanness of his nature, by sacrificing the unfortunate young lady, to mortify her father and mother.

To any but a prejudiced person my innocence must be very apparent; since, however fond I might have been of tattling, as the Duchess calls it, I had not a human being to talk to at the Lodge. The good lady-steward allowed this; shrugged her shoulders, thought my dismission hard:

"but who dared contradict the Duchess?" I took a hasty leave, and not without reason, for my friend seemed in misery every moment that I staid.

I found a lodging, for a couple of days, at a perfumer's, where I sometimes had made little purchases, and have got a place in the stage for Thursday; having spent (for me) a great deal, both of time and money, in a useless journey. I wrote immediately to Mrs. Granville, lest her haughty, cruel cousin should endeavour to rob me of my only protectress. I yet hope that she will not believe the Duchess, should she report the matter; and this hope springs from knowing that her partiality is ever in favour of those beneath her. Should I again be deceived—Oh, my ever-loved Amelia, how barbarously does the world discourage the upright! Self-love is so prevalent, that most people will rather asperse another with a crime than own an error of judgement in themselves. To what else has this insolent Duchess sacrificed an innocent, amiable, industri-

ous young woman! But have I ever yet had better fortune? Expelled by caprice, and sometimes with ignominy, from every house but one!—yet there, and there only, have I ever deviated from the golden rule. —I will not reflect, lest I should be tempted to repine! Thou, O Father of universal being! thou shalt be my support! On Thee, alone, will I rest my hopes; since, in Thy sight only, will poverty and misfortune become merits! Yet, since awhile I must wander though this miserable world, scatter over my path some few roses, lest the thorns should wound, too deeply, the bosom which has no hoard of sweets! Oh, Amelia! need I add that tears and Lord Westbury conclude this heart-drawn apostrophe!

Adieu!

LETTER LVIII.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

Beverley.

MY beloved, generous friend, what do I not owe to your watchful anxiety! Ah, how shall I ever recompense your fond, your unremitting affection! Could you think that my heart retained any power when it no longer remembered you? Hardly need I say that I have been on the verge of the grave, since you, even you, have been forgotten! A less active inquirer than the one whom you employed, would hardly have traced me to an obscure inn, in a town so remote. Yet that inn, heaven and earth seemed to have appointed as the place in which I should draw my last breath.

I was, I own, ashamed, when last I wrote, to tell you the depredation which grief and disappointment had made on my constitution. A severe rheumatic pain in

my head, occasioned by sitting in the cold gardens at Broome Wyndham, almost distracted me. I half resolved to stay another week at Scarborough, yet found myself so much the topic of conversation in that town as to awaken a curiosity of the most mortifying nature; and I had, besides, paid half the charge of my place to London. Prudence, therefore, obliged me to set out, though, on the appointed morning, I was miserably ill. In the coach, I found a prim quaker, an agreeable middle-aged lady, two rude officers of some trading vessel, and the loquacious mistress of a boarding-house. During the first twenty miles, poor Lady Betty's adventure was discussed in every possible way but the true one. Whether I was really unknown to those people, or they chose not to understand who I was, is beyond my comprehension; but it is certain that they spoke of me very freely to my face, as the mercenary confidante of an infamous amour, discarded by the Duchess with, if possible, more contumely than I

really had been. The agreeable widow whom I first mentioned, avoided the odious subject; and to her alone, of course, did I address myself. Each of us seemed willing to please the other, and shut out the rest of the party: yet the illiberal surmises, coarse jests, and unmerited censures of these misjudging beings, acted insensibly on my shattered nerves, and fermented, no doubt, my blood. On entering this town, the coachman, as usual, began rather to display his courage than his skill or humanity, and lashing the poor tired horses into a gallop, they ran a little out of the direct line, and, striking the hind wheel against a post, it broke into pieces, and the lumbering machine went over with incredible force. Several outside passengers were almost killed; and it was not immediately that those within could attract any attention. My naval associates, however, would be minded, and at length we were all dragged out. Being the undermost, I was almost stifled. I could not ascertain whether I was hurt

or not; but a surgeon, whom the people at the inn had sent for, pronounced me violently bruised, and in a high fever. A physician was then summoned, who declared my case dangerous. After being bled, I was put to bed; where my poor shook frame was presently afterwards tortured with a blister. That did not prevent, however, an alarming access of fever. I strove, as they say, every moment to spring out of bed. What vague images my fancy conjured up I cannot guess, but they tell me that I called the widow, whom I mentioned, by a thousand endearing names, and implored her not to leave me. She then took occasion to affect intimacy; and the coach being ready to proceed, she excused herself to the other passengers, that she might remain with her dear friend. She slept in the chamber with me, and took care to have the trunks of both placed there. After two days of unconscious misery, I was totally exhausted;

and a stupefaction, which the physician thought the sign of approaching dissolution, seized on me. Some faint intervals of reason I recollect: but before I could ascertain who I saw, or the place I was in, I again was lost in delirium. At this juncture, my new friend assured the landlord that she saw she could not be of any use to me, neither could she longer delay her pressing business, but would not fail immediately to send *my aunt* down from London to attend me. She had art enough to leave in his hands money enough to maintain me till this relation came, or bury me if I died in the interim. And thus was your poor Cecilia thrown upon the mercy of strangers! Three days had elapsed, after her departure, before it entered the heads of the good people of the house, that this woman might not belong to me; but as I then gave some signs of amendment, the innkeeper had no longer any hopes of getting rid of his charge, nor prospect of any person's coming to take it off his hands. Too late,

either for himself or me, he began to suspect the officious stranger, and had my trunks examined. Nothing, alas! was to be found in them, but a parcel of letters. This savage woman had availed herself of my helpless situation, to strip me of almost all that I could call my own in the world.

The people of the inn, incensed at a theft which they ought to have guarded against, and unable to find out from me to what extent I had been plundered, sent, vainly, to seize the defrauder; but not being able to learn what became of her after she had quitted the coach at Hull, where most probably she embarked for some remote place, their next care was to rid themselves of their breathing incumbrance; and this was the more necessary, as the town was filling for the ensuing election, and I occupied one of the best chambers. The wife's curiosity led her to peruse my letters; many of which, to her infinite surprise, had the signature of a nobleman, though no trace remained

of my own name; as, fortunately for my reputation, I had thrown the covers on which it was inscribed into the fire. They had no idea of any other tie subsisting between me and Lord Westbury than that of sense; but agreed, that, though he had probably cast me off, he might yet be led by humanity to assist me. A letter, descriptive of the situation of a young woman called Cecilia, who had once had the honour of corresponding with him, was therefore dispatched to my Lord. Alas! that dear lover was hardly in his senses on reading it. Yours, too, written in all the agony of terror, was delivered to him almost at the same moment, and before his carriage could be got ready to bring him hither.

In the dismal interval, your poor solitary friend had excited the pity of a young woman, whom the son of the inn-keeper had married without his father's consent, and who, consequently, was not admitted to the honour of being called one of the family. Her husband procured

her a sight of Lord Westbury's letters, and she had delicacy enough to discover from them my real situation. She intreated to have the care of me; which her brutal relatives gladly resigned to her; and, to the assiduous nursing of this gentle, sensible, interesting young creature, I probably owe the power of ever writing to you again.

I was, at last, enough myself to observe that I was among strangers, and faintly inquired how I came there. My amiable nurse tenderly apprised me of my accident; and (having learnt your name, doubtless from my delirious transports) assured me that I was among Mrs. Forrester's friends, and must keep myself quiet, or the doctor would not let her approach me. I submitted, at the sound of a name so dear, and had an uncertain notion of having seen you at my bed-side, doubtless during the paroxysms of my delirium.

I now took notice that none of the linen with which I was supplied belonged

to me, and required my own. Mrs. Moyle again had her answer ready—" the lock of the trunk was hampered, and her clothes were at my service." Returning recollection made me, at length, discern that every thing around me was too fine either for her degree or my own. I took occasion, in her absence, to bid the nurse bring my trunks to the bed side, and found in them a plentiful supply of every necessary, new, expensive, and elegant. —Judge of my astonishment! Mrs. Moyle could no longer deceive me; but to be told that I had been plundered—deserted—left to perish unknown and unlamented at an inn!——What a deadly chillness followed the idea! Yet, oh! my soul glowed to learn that he whose name was music to my ear, whose tenderness was renovation to my soul, had flown to watch over my safety, forestall my wants, live but for my welfare! That every evening he had fondly visited my chamber; where, no longer able to support the appearance of indifference, he had watered with his

tears those wan cheeks which no longer glowed even at his touch! Insensible even to Lord Westbury, not the charm of his presence could dispel a delirium to which his absence had but too sensibly contributed! To Mrs. Moyle he avowed the whole truth; and by his generous and virtuous anxiety did me noble justice.

To the innkeeper he was less explicit. By some golden arguments, however, he convinced the sordid savage that the whole idea he had formed was erroneous, as I was a lady of the Clifford family; nor could a single expression be found, he was certain, in any of my letters, at all improper or unsuited to his affinity with me. The man shrunk before this intelligence, and unsaid whatever he had already unwarily advanced.

I am, therefore, an ænigma to most of those who surround me, and may give to my own fate what colouring I please. A letter from my Lord had been left to apprise me of this, whenever the doctor

would permit me to open it. From this I understood that he had been obliged to quit the town, lest, by sending away his servants, he should excite their curiosity; or, by remaining here, gratify it.

O what a heart have I dared to unite with my own! — Incomparable, dear, worshipped Westbury! — Never, never did I love him half so well! It is he alone who enables me to contend with the evils of this miserable world! I would not, methinks, be even in a better without him!

He remains somewhere in the vicinity, where Mrs. Moyle sends him daily news of my health. He promises to write again. Ah! hasten to do so, my best beloved! Expand that noble heart upon paper, which, alas! I dare not wish nearer to mine!

I am mending fast.—Has not Lord Westbury been here? He has breathed a balmy healing spirit into the air that reaches the very heart of

Your

CECILIA.

LETTER LIX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

YES, I hold in my hand another letter from that so dear to me! Lord Westbury again tenderly, joyfully addresses me —again he enforces the arguments which he has already vainly urged, to induce me to depend on him—again he reproaches me for allowing the possibility of such an affecting casualty as this under which I am still suffering! Anxious yet more than myself concerning the opinion of those around me, he insists on my assuming his family name, and appearing in the place of a cousin of his, who is just gone out of the kingdom: thus alone can I, he urges, elude impertinent observers, and general curiosity. "To his *cousin*," he says, "he encloses a part of her fortune in bank-notes, that she may liberally reward those who took such care of her, while uncon-

scious of her claims on their attention." He adds, (dear, generous man!) "that he advises me not to be sparing; lest, if he finds me seized with a heedless fit of parsimony, he should be obliged to appear in this doughty acknowledgement: the last thing he would choose, if I will deign to consider that I am now a part of himself. Do I not deserve this, my sweet Cecilia," adds he, "since I have so far allowed for the severity of your decorum as to fly even from her whom I adore? Oh, deign to repay this painful effort by one frank commendation; and let me taste the luxury of a praise which is given by affection, and endeared by the sweet consciousness of my having deserved it!"

It is instances of delicate tenderness like these, which wholly soften and subdue the heart!—Mine so completely dissolved in softness, while I read his letter, as to make it well for both that he who wrote it was no longer near me.

I answered him, however, immediately; and sought to tell him all my

thoughts; but language, perhaps, has hardly power for that: however, I have declared my attachment to be now so unlimited, that I accept even his bounty without hesitation, considering it as due to the occasion, and a new band thrown round those which already entwined our hearts. I further said, that I have applied his liberality as that of a lover should be applied—to rendering lovers happy; and did he see the tears which his bounty has drawn forth from hearts united by affection, but pinched by poverty, he would think himself amply rewarded. Nor will I regret robbing him here of the gratitude of this young and faithful pair, since it is set down to the right account in heaven.

To recompense his tender discretion, without seeming to yield the indulgence to myself, is, I tell him, impossible; yet am I so poor and desolate that I can only offer him a dangerous and vain gratification. Mrs. Moyle will accompany me, as soon as I am able, to any place which

he shall fix on, where he may see me for some hours unobserved.

* * * * * *

He has already answered my letter, for he is only at York; and named a little lonely inn out of the high road,—"as free," he says, "from all interlopers, as if in the deserts of Arabia." He assures me that he can come thither alone, and I need not entertain any apprehension of observers. I find I have twenty miles to ride this morning; and that, for such a poor, unrecovered creature, is a bold undertaking.

* * * * * *

Two days have hardly enabled me to recover the fatigue of one;—that one, that happy one! vanished instantaneously, as it were. My Lord came on almost to Beverley to meet my chaise, and rode afterwards by its side. You can hardly guess, unless you have seen Lord Westbury ride, at the exquisite grace of his figure on horseback. I never saw any human being at once so easy and so

spirited. The delight with which I heard and viewed him vivified his complexion, and sparkled in his eyes. Mrs. Moyle must have been blind, had she not discerned the partial interest each took in the other; but she, alas! poor young creature, had many fears, cares, and hopes: I had none but in him or for him, and all were suspended in his company. Mrs. Moyle, either from some previous hint which my Lord had given her, or real indisposition, withdrew awhile after dinner into a room adjoining, and left us without a third person.

I then learnt that Lady Betty's unlucky adventure had reached him at York, with every mortifying aggravation. Luckily her governess was so insignificant as to be without any name. Severely hurt at the injurious treatment which I had endured, he conjured me, tenderly conjured me, to accept some little testimony of the disinterested affection I had inspired, which otherwise must labour in vain to preserve me from difficulties and indigni-

ties, it would be, through me, condemned to partake. Do you know that all the arguments his tenderness had hitherto urged, touched me less than this simple one—"If," he added, "this country was really so agreeable to me, why would I abandon the solitude I admired? He had a family-seat (perhaps he should rather say the ruins of one) not ill adapted to a poetical retired taste like mine. It was in the midst of rich, wild, sequestered scenery; and inhabited only by a farmer, with his family, as honest as the mastiffs, and as old as the rooks. Who could molest me there? Lady Westbury had never ventured so far from the metropolis in her life; and he solemnly vowed that he would never once invade the sanctuary he thus offered me."—But, alas! my dear, while he grasped my hands with an almost convulsive ardour, while the tears stood in his eyes, and mine overflowed, how could I hope that he would keep his promise? Ah, me! how hard was it to reject this proposal—to live under his pro-

tection—to be at liberty to think only of himself—to watch over his welfare! Oh, it was too tempting not to be dangerous!

I tenderly excused myself; and to prove that fortune yet offered me an eligible asylum, showed him a paragraph in the newspaper then lying on the table, announcing the death of Lady Austin. I doubt not but that Miss Fermor will welcome warmly the friend who so faithfully served and loved her; and to her do I mean to go. I rendered him every acknowledgement which he so well merited, and bade him judge by the pleasure it gave me to apply his bounty, what pain I must feel at limiting his affecting kindness.

The close of evening carried us, after many a tender adieu, different ways.

LETTER LX.

TO MRS. FORRESTER.

London.

HOW is it, Amelia, that one bright day can gild a melancholy year? Still enfeebled with illness, still as remote as ever from happiness, I find all harmony within and without. The yellow hand of October has tinged the whole creation; softening and enriching every thing it touches. In the words a great poet uses on another occasion, I may say that Autumn

"Gives more beauties than he takes away."

Nothing can be more enchanting than the face of this country, especially the first stage from Beverley: indeed the whole tract I have passed is luxuriant and interesting. My eyes wandered over its beautiful varieties with a pleasure so perfect and so pure, as proves how much the very senses derive from the blessed

composure of a gratified and upright heart.

I can hardly guess how I should adapt myself to actually living with Lord Westbury in his own proper person; for I now am so accustomed to pass my days with an ideal object, bearing his lineaments, that, were he not to resemble it, I should hardly be happy. A necessary degree of habitual intercourse seems wanting to enable us to live well with the object of our choice, which it is an equal misfortune to fall short of or exceed. When we are obliged to forego the society of the lover, who has never degraded himself from that height to which imagination elevates him, every thought, every moment, adds grandeur and grace to the image, till it scarcely falls short of divinity. Yet can even imagination add aught to the natural advantages of Lord Westbury?—Yes, I will strive to think that possible; so may my weak heart have some excuse left for daring to adore him.

I have again availed myself of Mrs.

Granville's kindness, and find in her house an asylum. She laughs at the infatuation and rage of the Duchess, and once more engages to find for me a more comfortable home.

Alas! my heart prognosticated that it would seek in vain Miss Fermor.—Dear, unhappy, persecuted girl! she has either to weep, through a long life, the error of its outset, or has sunk already into that grave over which a savage seducer spread the empoisoned garlands of love. I wish yet to meet with her. The influence I know I cannot but have over her tender nature, might recal her to virtue, and all its noble energies. Ah! sooner might she obtain the pardon of the whole world than her own, especially forewarned as she was by me!

I hastened, yesterday morning, to the late Lady Austin's; at whose door stood a chariot, and several servants in mourning. The insolent set continued to crack nuts, with the most impertinent *nonchalance*, hardly deigning to answer a female

without a carriage. On hearing that I asked for Miss Fermor, they turned from one to the other with surprise; nor did I find that the name had ever reached their ears before. While I was urging the inquiry, a door opened, and Mr. Monro appeared, as going to the carriage.—How gay, how handsome, how specious looked the villain! Not even Lord Westbury, rich as he is in the prodigality of nature, could have appeared more captivating. He would have passed on, but I ventured to address to him the same inquiry for his cousin.—"Upon my soul," cried he, "I do not know what is become of her!" Oh, thou false one! thought I; as false to God as to man! for, as if swearing were not vice enough in itself, men are, I observe, much apter to strengthen a falsehood with an oath, than a truth. I fancy all this was expressed in my looks, for he flushed, and seemed perplexed; but at length, merely I believe to get rid of the subject, added, "that he would conduct me to his wife, who should tell

me all she knew of Amy." He drew me now, with eagerness, into a *boudoir*, superbly fitted up, where Mrs. Monro sat with the breakfast things yet before her. Again I addressed inquiries for poor Miss Fermor to her; but I saw in a moment, that, whatever her fate was, Mrs. Monro knew it not; with so much frankness did she assure me that she rather looked to me for information, than was enabled to give it. I then asked how long Miss Fermor had been missing. "Almost from the time you left Lady Austin," Mrs. Monro answered. I turned, and, with a look even more emphatic than my words, said to Mr. Monro, "And have *you*, Sir, never, from that time, seen your unfortunate cousin?" His eye sunk under mine. He was not proof against the suspicion so clearly conveyed; nor would he, I think, have replied to it, but his lady saved him, by taking that task upon herself. Poor, conscious wretch! he was in a predicament so odious, that he neither dared to encounter my looks, nor

to leave me with his wife, lest I should open her eyes. She, weak woman, imputed his lingering to some remains of a gallant regard for me, which she, not without reason, believed he avowed while I was an inmate with them; and, of course, every moment regarded me with increasing coldness. I could not but smile at recollecting that motives so different produced only the same effect, and that both equally wished me out of the house.

Yet I pitied Mrs. Monro, who spoke with some tenderness of the sweet Amelia, and gave me to understand that her elopement had induced Lady Austin to make a new will, and bestow all her fortune on her nephew. I could not, on hearing this, permit him to hope that he had deceived me. I allowed the feelings of my mind to mark my countenance; and, too surely, he read there a conviction of his guilt: nor was the language unintelligible to him. He has obtained the right of a ruined, unprotected orphan; but to enjoy it even he wants hardiness. A poor insignif-

cant, like your Cecilia, can appal the prosperous villain in the midst of all his splendor—that splendor which he secured by a total sacrifice of conscience and humanity. At length I took my leave, and released him from mental torture; while poor Mrs. Monro, to the last, kept her eye on us both, nor dreamt that we had long been equally odious to each other. Had he not judged my heart by his own, he might have known that I should too much respect the innocence and peace of his lady to embitter her future days by disclosing my suspicions; but fear was wisely ordained, by the Giver of all things, to be the inseparable companion of guilt.

Oh, how my very soul yearns over this lovely, destitute, distressed Amelia! Persecuted by her only relation, importuned by a villain, too capable of giving to his mean and selfish views the colouring of love, betrayed by the partial weakness of her own heart to the seduction of his, there was one chance only in her favour. Had she availed herself of the cautions

which I gave her, all had been well; but, with a credulity too common at her age to be unpardonable, she saw not their importance; and now, alas! they will only heighten and double the pangs of self-reproach.

How strangely is this world chequered: just at the moment when our very souls recoil from a character corrupt as that of Monro, Lord Westbury irradiates it with the illumination of his virtues, and counterbalances the involuntary prejudice. Did not this often happen, the pure of heart would abhor society, and become anchorites.

What a loss is this sweet Amelia (worthy even of that name, so long consecrated to my ear) to that world which she might one day have embellished with her mild and modest graces! From her softened heart, the early seat of misfortune, her melancholy sweetness of disposition, what a touching character might have been compounded under happier auspices. Maturer years would have left her no more of her former self than might have

graced her acquirements; for she was docile as infancy to those whom she loved. Yet the monster who has destroyed all these hopes, who has in "unblown youth" deprived her of a woman's first perfection, left her nothing to wish for but obscurity and death, intends no doubt to make his exit from the world with great *éclat*; and to affix over his mouldering bones a superb monument, to blazon forth a thousand superior qualities, the names of which, alone, he ever knew. Fie upon it! How many are the slaves of vice, and how many more slaves to the slaves!—promoters of sins they dare not participate; yet, perhaps, strictly considered, they are more criminal than even their employers, since they are not blinded by the illusions of passion. Adieu!—You see how my subject irritates me.

END OF VOL. II.

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